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Abstract

Using a mixed method, two-phase approach, this research identified perceived barriers to education by selected Alberta day care workers. The first stage consisted of conducting a focus group. The focus group was used as the foundation for the development of a survey questionnaire. The survey was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from the day care workers.

The results of the study are relevant to policy makers, educational providers, practitioners, and the public. They indicate that there are few educational barriers that committed day care workers cannot overcome. The barriers that were perceived could be grouped into dispositional, situational, institutional and sociopolitical categories. The situational barriers of money and time were found to be most influential. Of importance was the finding that barriers to education are found between and within the relationships and structures in the day care workers environment.

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Barriers to Education in Early Childhood Development submitted by Patricia R. Lirette in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education.

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Aug 17/00

To EJFL and my girls, for your patience and love.

Special thanks to my colleagues at GMCC for their unwavering support and advice.

This work is dedicated to my mom, Elaine U. MacKay, my first teacher and mentor.

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Chapter One

The Problem and The Context

To support the physical, social/emotional and cognitive development of young children, day care staff require specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The link between staff training and quality programming has been well documented in the literature (Doherty and Stuart, 1996; Goelman and Pence, 1987; Lyon and Canning, 1995). We know that:

> the single most important component of quality child care in promoting healthy child development is the nature of the daily relationship and interactions between the care giver and the child, and is supported by the other quality factors. Research has consistently shown that post secondary education related to child development and early childhood education practices increase the likelihood of warm, responsive and stimulating relationships between caregivers and children and positive child development outcomes (Beach, 1998, p.13).

In 1992, it was reported that day care workers in Alberta had the lowest level of training in Canada (Schom-Moffat, 1992). As an instructor of Early Childhood Development (ECD) at a community college, I am always cognizant of this fact. It is hard to comprehend that in a province with mandated training requirements and a strong provincial system of ECD training programs the majority of people working in day care do not have an adequate level of education. What is keeping day care workers from completing postsecondary training?

The phenomenon of barriers or deterrents to participation in education has been widely documented (Boshier, 1973; Courtney, 1992; Cross, 1981; Darkenwald and Valentine, 1985; Rubenson, 1985). Barriers have been identified that range from individual/ psychological to external/social barriers (Lowden, 1990). Numerous factors that influence participation have been identified. These factors have been categorized and studied by researchers like Cross, (1981); Darkenwald and Valentine, (1985); and McGivney, (1993). Specific models of participation and barriers to participation are examined in chapter two.

Cross's (1981) research on barriers gives us a useful framework to use as a reference for the ECD population. She describes three general categories of barriers to further education for adults: situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers. She defines situational barriers as "those that arise from one's situation in life at a given time" (p. 98). Dispositional barriers are "those related to attitudes and self perceptions about oneself as a learner" (p. 98). Institutional barriers "consist of all the practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities"(p. 98).

The Context of the Study

In this section, the context of this research is provided through an examination of day care and the status of day care workers in Canada and in Alberta. This includes a description of the ECD training system, as well as the legislated requirements for day care staff training in Alberta. The work and education of day care workers in Alberta does not occur in isolation from the sociopolitical environment of this province. This cultural context is also examined here.

Day Care in Alberta

Currently there are 562 day care centres operating in Alberta. The provincial government, through the Department of Children's Services, regulates day care through the Social Care Facilities Act. The Department of Children's Services is mandated to provide four broad areas of support to Alberta day care centres including licensing and monitoring, best practices, a subsidy program for low income families and staff qualifications and certification.

The average cost of care/fee for a preschool age child in Alberta is $425.00 per month (Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange, and Tougas, 2000). It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to pay this fee. Through the subsidy program, low income parents are eligible for up to $300.00 per month towards the cost of care. Approximately 13,000 children in Alberta are subsidized to attend day care (Beach 1998).

The quality of care received by children in day care centres is a key issue. Definitions of quality vary but recent work helps to identify some of the elements of quality day care. Traditionally, the three critical elements of quality consist of the ratio of caregivers to children, the number of children in the group, and the caregiver's training in day care related areas. These three have been coined the "iron triangle", because together they provide a solid foundation for quality care (Kaiser and Skylar-Rasminsky, 1999). Recently other contextual factors have been identified that help support this foundation. These include: responsive, stable child-caregiver interactions, low caregiver turnover, daily routines that support children's learning and protect their wellbeing, a positive organizational climate, including the

Director's administrative style, and an appropriate safe physical environment for children and staff (Beach, 1998; Kaiser and Skylar-Rasminsky, 1999).

The quality of care for children is affected by a number of factors including funding, auspice, and regulation (Beach, 1998). Appropriate levels of funding that enable centres to pay higher wages and to provide benefits to their day care workers are related to better quality care. Low salaries tend to lead to job dissatisfaction and high turnover rates (Schom-Moffat, 1992).

The auspices of care also influence quality. Day care services are provided in Alberta by both non-profit and commercial/ for profit operators. Commercial centres are predominant in Alberta, offering 70% of day care services (Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange, and Tougas, 2000). High quality child care is more likely to be found in non-profit than in commercial day care centre (Beach, 1998).

The level of regulation of day care is linked to higher quality. The higher the level of regulation, especially around caregiver education, caregiver-child ratio and group size the higher the quality of care received by children (Beach, 1998).

It appears that to offer quality day care the children of Alberta, the level of qualifications of the workforce and the stability of this workforce must be addressed. Each piece of research on quality care to date underlines the importance of the day care worker as a pivotal piece of the quality puzzle. What do we know about this under- recognized and often nearly invisible group?

The Day Care Workforce

Recent research on the Canadian childcare workforce has given us the best picture to date of this field. The report More than a Labour of Love (1998) describes

a field that is emergent and diverse, yet struggling to address many issues. These issues include human resource problems, lack of public recognition of the value of this field, and the resultant lack of public funding and necessary resources. It describes the childcare workforce as diverse in their ages, education, and backgrounds, yet similar in gender and low income. In Canada today, there is a wide variation in the level of knowledge and skill among childcare workers. Those in the occupation are poorly paid, have few occupational benefits, and lack opportunities for professional development (Beach, 1998).

Schom-Moffat (1992) in Caring for a Living describes the situation of day care workers in Alberta regarding salary, working conditions, and demographics. The overall mean wage of those working in daycare is $6.95 an hour (p. 131). With day care wages hovering at minimum wage, the cost of post-secondary education becomes prohibitive to these workers. Also there is little reparation for gaining higher levels of training or certification, as a day care worker with Level 3 certification makes on average only 60 cents more per hour. Thus the commitment and costs associated with post secondary education represent significant barriers.

In 1992, the turnover rate of staff in Alberta day care centres at 42% was the highest of any province in Canada (Schom-Moffat, 1992). By 1999, the turnover rate had climbed to 45% (Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange and Tougas, 1999). This is of real concern as consistency of staff is related to quality care. The high turnover rate of staff is also related to work place stress and low morale (Beach, 1998) and to a continued high demand for trained staff. With trained staff in such high demand it becomes increasingly difficult for employers to release workers from their jobs to

attend training and to meet training program requirements like practicums. With constant workforce turnover, it is a real challenge to increase the skill level of day care workers in this province.

More than 99% of day care workers in Alberta are female (Schom-Moffat, 1992). Many report difficulty combining training with their work and family responsibilities. Women's ability to participate in education is greatly affected by their family structure, and their domestic and economic circumstance (McGivney, 1993). McGivney reports that situational barriers like lack of time are evident in this population.

Public perception of the role of day care workers influences this work force. Only 16% of day care workers in Alberta believe that they have the respect of the general public (Schom-Moffat, 1992, p.131). "There is no clear public recognition of the contribution that caregivers make to society as a whole. As a result, caregivers do not receive either the public support or the resources they need to provide quality care for all children" (Beach, 1998, p.1). Many ECD students are faced with questions about why they have to go to school if they just "play with kids all day." Society tends to under-value this work and children, while at the same time the field of child care is advancing towards professionalization (Beach, 1998). With this professionalization comes the expectation that day care workers need training and expertise to meet the demands of their jobs. Yet this training and expertise is not valued by society through the provision of adequate wages.

ECD Training

Across Canada, there is no consistent concept of what constitutes a trained or qualified day care worker (Beach, 1998). There are 117 postsecondary institutions that deliver certificate, diploma, and degree programs in Early Childhood Education. Provincial and territorial governments establish program guidelines and approval procedures for post secondary programs.

In Alberta, there are nine community colleges that deliver certificate and diploma programs in Early Childhood Development: Grande Prairie Regional College, Grant MacEwan College, Keyano College, Lakeland College, Lethbridge Community College, Medicine Hat College, Mount Royal College, Portage College and Red Deer College. These programs offer ECD courses on a full time, part time, evening, and outreach basis, and by distance delivery. In 1995-96 there were approximately 2610 enrollments in ECD courses in Alberta (Beach, 1998).

An Early Childhood Coordinating Committee representing all the public colleges in Alberta serves as a network for cooperation and coordination among college programs. They work to ensure that the college programs are credible and of high quality, and that students have transfer opportunities between ECD programs, other human service programs and some university programs. Through this group, the public colleges also try to stay responsive to the field and to adult learners, and to ensure accessible and flexible programs. They have successfully negotiated with Alberta Advanced Education a curriculum that mandates a specific minimum number of hours of study to help ensure consistency of training and core content across the province. Research in the field is also beginning to show ECD educators

the best practices in ECD training. For example, the joint ACCC-CCCF Program of Research on ECCE Training (1997) recently proposed 15 principles to guide quality early childhood development training.

Recently private colleges have begun to offer ECD training in Alberta. There has been no documented information on how this trend will effect the level of quality of training that day care workers receive. Currently, Day Care Staff Qualifications will accept the training from private institutions towards Level 3 certification. However, the public colleges do not give credit for course work done in private institutions, making it difficult for students to move between institutions. Students of private colleges may find that certifying bodies in other provinces do not recognize their training either.

In terms of the level of training in Alberta, there may be a positive trend. In 1992, Schom-Moffat reported in Caring for a Living that 62% of Alberta daycare staff had no postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree compared to 32% of day care staff in all of Canada (p.131). At that time the Alberta provincial government had just introduced new training legislation. This legislation appears to have had a positive effect. Current research shows an increase in the number of day care workers who hold a certificate, diploma or degree. However, those in Alberta with Level 3 certification (30.9%) are still below the national average of 37.8% and are far from the Ontario rate of 60.6% (Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange, and Tougas, 1999).

Day Care Certification in Alberta

Certification refers to a system for recognizing individuals based on their level of education, experience and/or their competence to practice an occupation. Obtaining certification demonstrates an individual's ability to meet pre-determined occupational standards of knowledge, skills and abilities (Ogston, 1998).

In response to the research linking training to quality care and in an attempt to improve the quality of care in Alberta, the provincial government mandated educational certification for day care workers in 1990. Certification for day care workers in Alberta is intended "to attest to your training and your awareness of issues related to the delivery of safe quality services to preschool children" (Alberta Family and Social Services, 1996, p.5). The paper, "Alberta Day Care Reforms" (1990), outlines the criteria for receiving day care certification in this province.

There are three levels of certification for day care workers in Alberta: Level 1 – Orientation Qualification Certificate; Level 2- Basic Qualification Certificate; and Level 3- Advanced Qualification Certificate. Alberta Children's Services, Day Care Staff Qualifications Branch uses the ECD programs offered by Alberta's public colleges as the bench mark for the certification process. Five distinct areas of knowledge have been outlined by Alberta Family and Social Services (1996). These fundamental areas (child development, programming, relationships, practicum, and related courses) are used to assess certification levels and training equivalencies.

Level 1 certification requires the completion of the 50 hour Day Care Orientation course or equivalent course work as approved by Alberta Family and Social Services (Alberta Family and Social Services, 1996). It seems that thought was given to making attaining Level 1 certification fairly barrier free. Alberta Family

and Social Services provides this course free of charge through contracts with the public colleges in the province. It is provided on evenings and weekends and is also available by distance delivery to those who are geographically isolated. Until recently there were no assignments or assessments of the learning in the Orientation course making it difficult for students to be unsuccessful. Required worksheets were eventually incorporated into each module of the course in response to demands for more accountability from the participants. English language assistance is also provided in these courses (D. Ryan, personal communication, June 2000).

Level 2 certification requires the completion of training equivalent to a one year ECD certificate program (30 credits) offered by an Alberta public college (Alberta Family and Social Services, 1996). Level 3 certification requires the completion of training that is at least equivalent to a two year ECD diploma (60 credits) offered by an Alberta public college (Alberta Family and Social Services, 1996). Day care workers who are trying to acquire the education necessary to gain Level 2 or Level 3 certification generally report difficulties completing their certification (G. Furuness, personal communication, December 8, 1999).

All employed day care workers in Alberta must apply for day care certification. They must submit post secondary transcripts of their previous education to Day Care Staff Qualifications for assessment. Upon review they are awarded a certification number and a level of certification equivalent to their level of training. Of those who have differing educational backgrounds (ie foreign credentials) their transcripts are assessed based on the five foundational areas of knowledge as described earlier. They are then offered a certification number and a level of

certification equivalent to their post secondary training in the area of early childhood development.

Day care centres must conform to regulations that outline the specific number of staff they must have at each level of training. The training requirements state that all program directors must have Level 3 certification, one out of every four primary staff must have Level 2 certification, and all other primary staff must have Level 1 certification (Alberta Family and Social Services, 1996). A program director is "a person on the staff of a day care centre who i) is 18 years of age or older, and ii) whose duty it is to provide on site supervision of the daily operation of the day care centre." A primary staff is defined as "a person on the staff at a day care centre i) whose duty is child care and who is actively engaged in the supervision, safety, well-being, and development of children, and ii) who is included in the calculation of the minimum primary staff-to-child ratios" (Alberta Family and Social Services, 1996, p. 7). If centres cannot meet the mandated number of trained staff, they may apply to Day Care Staff Qualifications for an exemption.

Exemptions are granted to day care centres when staff cannot meet the legislated levels of training. For example in a day care centre with nine workers, all must have Level 1 certification, two must have Level 2 certification and the program supervisor must have Level 3 certification. If, for instance, one of the staff who requires Level 2 certification has only 18 out of the 30 credits of post secondary ECD education they may apply for an exemption. This indicates to the licensing body that they are currently working towards achieving the required level of training.

The Day Care Staff Qualifications Branch of Alberta Children's Services keeps statistics of the number of certified staff in Alberta. They collect information on the number of day care staff in Alberta who have applied for, received, or are exempted for each level of certification. As of March 2000, there were 5,954 day care staff employed in Alberta. Of these 3,400 had Level 1 certification. Another 846 day care workers had Level 2 certification and 1,414 had Level 3 certification. Of these numbers, close to 1000 day care centre staff are currently exempted. This means they are enrolled, or in the process of enrolling, in course work that, upon completion, would qualify them for a higher level of certification. Day Care Staff Qualifications report that they are processing between 200 and 300 requests for exemptions per month (D. Joslin, personal communication, March 8, 1999).

The high number of Level 1 certification implies that the majority of Alberta day care workers only hold minimum levels of training related to early childhood development. The high rate of requests for exemptions indicates that workers are moving towards completing the training that is required for higher levels of certification. It could be that the process is slowed by conflicting demands like competing work and family demands and by other barriers to education.

Sociopolitical Context

Merriam and Caffarella (1991) believe that education is situated in a societal context. For day care workers in Alberta, this context appears to include two competing or contrasting paradigms. One reality is that the demographics of this workforce and their economic status appear to support the idea that children and women's work is under-valued by our society and political structures. In addition,

there is a popular belief that people (women) do not need an education to care for children. This diminishes society's support for this type of education. The other reality is the current move towards professional status of the early childhood field through the development of research that represents a core body of knowledge in the field. We must understand this set of competing realities to see the barriers to participation in ECD education in a more holistic manner.

In Canada, there is no national child care system. Unlike other Canadian social, health, and education services, the costs of child care are largely considered the private responsibility of the parent or guardian, so the compensation caregivers receive is based on the parent's ability to pay. Child care is not provided as an essential public service. "In market driven systems, like Canada and the United States, the development of services is dependant on the voluntary and commercial sectors, and virtually all public funding is targeted to low income and at-risk families" (Beach, 1998, p. 53).

In this market approach there is assumed to be little public interest or benefit in quality day care. However, there is growing documentation of how society as a whole will benefit from an integrated system of quality child care. These benefits include economic productivity, increased workforce participation, less criminal activity, and lower costs associated with supports like welfare and social services (Cleveland and Krashinsky, 1998; National Crime Prevention Council, 1996).

Provinces and territories regulate child care services in their own jurisdictions. In Quebec and British Columbia, recent new government programs have recognized the necessity of accessible, affordable child care for families. In

Alberta, the neo-conservative approach to government provides a difficult environment for child care workers. The policy directions of the provincial government toward child care have gone through numerous phases (Hayden, 1997). The "pre program" phase began in 1942 and ended in 1977. During this phase the government played a rather non-interventionist role in the delivery and development of day care services. The next phase from 1978 to 1986 is referred to as the "generous allotments" phase and is characterized by the investment of provincial dollars with minimal restrictions on child care services. In 1986, the government began phase III which Hayden (1997) has labeled a period of "regulatory reform." During this time, the provincial government became more interventionist and introduced more rigorous standards for licensed child care services. This phase lasted until 1993. Between 1993 and 1995, a new phase of "fiscal restraint" occurred, during which program delivery appears to have been driven by the aim to reduce funding to day care (Hayden, 1997).

The changes in policy direction have effectively limited the development of a child care infrastructure in the province, led to delays in action, and created tensions in the child care community. The Alberta government is currently in the fifth phase, a marginalization/devolution phase that is characterized by their withdrawal from intervention in child care and the downloading of responsibility onto the private or community level (Hayden, 1997). The provincial government's current move to regionalize child welfare (including day care programs) is a good example of this shift in policy.

As recently as May 1999, the Department that housed day care programs (Alberta Family and Social Services) was again disrupted by the formation of a new Ministry called "Children's Services." The new ministry will focus on the well being of children and families with an emphasis on community based solutions to local issues, early support and prevention and integrated services. Iris Evans was named the new Minister on May 26, 1999. In January 2000, this Ministry underwent a major reorganization. At this writing, there is very little concrete information available on how this change impacts day care programs in Alberta. However, it does appear that the new Ministry of Children's Services will continue to certify Alberta day care workers in an attempt to support the quality of day care services in this province.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of my research is **to identify the perceived barriers to early childhood development education as experienced by selected day care workers.** In Alberta, ECD education is the responsibility of, and offered at, the post secondary level by the college system. Upon completion of training, students receive a two-year diploma from their institution. They may then apply for certification from the Day Care Staff Qualifications Branch of Alberta Children's Services. Thus certification is the outcome of their ECD training. For the purpose of this study the term "achieving Level 3 certification" is synonymous with completing two years of ECD education.

Below are the initial research questions. These acted as guiding questions for this thesis. They were used to generate further questions and to search for patterns of barriers that exist in the target population. By answering these questions within a

broader social context, it also provided impetus to find solutions to overcome the participants perceived barriers.

Research Question and Subquestions

What are the perceived barriers to early childhood development education as experienced by selected Alberta day care workers and how can these barriers be addressed?

1. What are the situational barriers perceived by day care workers?

2. What are the dispositional barriers perceived by day care workers?

3. What are the institutional barriers perceived by day care workers?

4. How does the social/political context, as perceived by day care workers, act as a barrier?

5. How do the participants suggest that these barriers be addressed?

Definition of Terms

The following explanations are offered to provide clarity to the research report.

Day care qualification/certification: Refers to the process used by the Day Care Staff Qualifications Branch of the Alberta Government to recognize the different educational levels of day care workers.

Early Childhood Development (ECD): I will use the term ECD to differentiate between College level training and undergraduate study of Early Childhood Education at a bachelor degree level. While some view the term education and training as distinctly different approaches to adult learning, for the purposes of this study the term is used interchangeably.

Barriers to Education: Cross (1981) describes three general categories of barriers to further education for adults: situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers.

- Situational barriers: "those that arise from one's situation in life at a given time" (p. 98).
- Dispositional barriers: "those related to attitudes and self perceptions about oneself as a learner" (p. 98).
- Institutional barriers: "consist of all the practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities"(p. 98).

Chapter Summary and Organization of the Thesis

This chapter has established the context and described the parameters and significance of this research. Cross (1981) described barriers to continuing education as situational, dispositional, or institutional. These barriers are placed within the current socio-cultural context in which the day care workforce currently functions because "learning does not occur in a vacuum" (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991, p.20).

Chapter Two provides a discussion of the literature related to the research problem and the sub-problems through an examination of the research related to motivation and participation in education for adult learners. In Chapter Three, the methodology for the study is outlined. The findings are provided in Chapter Four. The final chapter of the thesis summarizes the data and draws conclusion to the study.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to identify the perceived barriers to early childhood development (ECD) education as experienced by a sample of Alberta day care workers. As preparation for this research, a literature review was conducted. In the literature the terms "barrier," "obstacle," and "deterrent" all appear to be used interchangeably to describe a perceived or real impediment to participating in postsecondary education.

A study of barriers cannot be conducted in isolation from the research on participation and motivation. Barriers form an integral part of most research on participation, as they are one of the factors that influence the decision about whether to participate. Research on barriers has led to a number of models of participation being posed. Six such models are examined here for factors relevant to the ECD population. Cross's (1981) categories of barriers are examined for their application to this research. Darkenwald's (1982) typology and his "Deterrents to Participation Scale" were reviewed.

As this research group is composed primarily of women, literature related to women and education and specifically women and barriers to education was examined. In this review, the current context for women day care workers will be integrated into existing models of educational participation and research on barriers. As described in the introduction, the workforce in the field of ECD, owing to the nature of its work, operates within a specific socio-political framework in Alberta.

Later in the chapter, barriers to day care worker participation are framed using an ecological systems approach.

Adult Learners

When considering barriers to participation for adult learners, Waldron and Moore (1991) suggest that we must begin by recognizing the psychological dimensions of adulthood, by being aware of the needs of adult learners, and by understanding their characteristics as learners. As adult learners, day care workers share many of the characteristics of adult students in the general population. Adult learners differ from traditional students of college age whose main task is preparing for adulthood. Most are already self-supporting, mature, responsible, and lead lives as independent citizens with family and career responsibilities (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). Their needs as students are varied. Adult students are diverse in their goals, skills, intellectual capacities and learning styles (Theil, 1984). They bring a rich variety of past life experiences. They require different support services than traditional students on campus (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). They also have different reasons for participating and not participating in adult education.

Motivation

Beder (1990) summarizes three reasons why adults fail to participate in adult education: lack of motivation, motivated but deterred by something, or unaware of educational opportunities. Most research on non-participation operates from the position that adults are motivated to return or to continue their education but something stands in their way (Rubenson, 1985). These obstacles would vary according to different populations of adult learners (Darkenwald, 1985 as sited in

Beder, 1990). It is assumed by the researcher, that ECD students also are motivated to continue their training, but that barriers stand in their way.

Some say that the greatest source of motivation for adults returning to school appears to be the anticipated outcomes. When adults believe that the time they invest in education will result in improvements in their lives, they are more willing to persevere (Gorback, 1994). However, in general the economic returns from education are lower for women than for men (Gaskell and McLaren, 1990). This is particularly true for the ECD field, where graduates from a two-year program earn significantly less than other occupations that require the same amount of training. For example, a survey of 1990 ECD graduates from community colleges in Canada showed an average earning of $20,100 for full time work in 1992. In comparison, female graduates from other 2-year community college programs were earning an average of $23,200 or 15% more than ECD grads (as cited in Beach, 1998).

Participation Issues

The target population of this study shares many of the characteristics of the adult learner population at large. Based on my reading, I have identified three additional characteristics associated with women students that would certainly impact their participation: a poor perception of themselves as learners (Gaskell and McLaren, 1991; Hall and Donaldson, 1997; McGivney, 1993; Taylor, 1999), a distinctive pattern of participation that has been named "stopping out"(Bird, 1997; Gaskell and McLaren, 1990; Kerka, 1995), and the influence of gender on women's educational experience (McGivney, 1993). These characteristics are discussed next.

Perception of Self as a Learner

Many women return to school with a sense of personal inadequacy, but with high hopes (Gaskell and McLaren, 1991). A British study by Morgan (1992) reported that it was a common tendency for women to undersell themselves, undervalue their experiences, to over look the skills they have accumulated and to aim lower than their ability level (as cited in McGivney, 1993). These types of negative feelings towards oneself are often the strongest and most resistant obstacles to participation in education (McGivney, 1993). In a recent study by Taylor (1999) first year ECD students described their lack of faith in themselves as learners.

Hall and Donaldson (1997) explore this characteristic of women further. They studied why women without a high school diploma chose not to participate in adult education. Their reasons included factors like economic status, lack of support systems and situational barriers like time and lack of child care. What is most relevant is their report of the discovery of what they termed a fourth dynamic called "lack of voice." "The way a woman feels about herself, her self esteem and self confidence, and the way she can express herself are significant elements in her decision about whether to participate in adult education" (Hall and Donaldson, 1997, p.98).

Women's perception of self is also influenced by cultural attitudes. These attitudes can reinforce and perpetuate their disadvantaged position (McGivney, 1993). MacKinnon-Slaney (1994) agrees, stating that adult learners must have a stable sense of their gender and their cultural identity. They must have a good sense of their right to take part in educational activities (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and

Tarule, 1986). In the ECD field, the work suffers from the cultural assumption that it is the proven and natural duty of women to care for and raise children (Gaskell and McLaren, 1991). Further, because this is perceived to come naturally to women they do not need specific education to carry out this work. It is widely regarded as an easy job, that day care workers just play all day.

Patterns of Attendance

Another characteristic shared by the ECD population and adult students and with women students in general is a particular pattern of participation. This pattern varies from traditional students who either attend or drop out. The pattern for many adult learners is called "stopping out." Kerka (1995) discusses this phenomenon as "one or more cycles of attending, withdrawing and returning" (p.1) which is typical of adult learners. In one study by Scott (1980), almost half of the women participating had left their program at least once (as cited in Gaskell and McLaren, 1990). This pattern was also evident in the British research done by Bird (1997) who states that the term "stopping out" more accurately reflects the participation pattern of the students in her study than "dropping out." Based on informal observations, I believe that this pattern of participation also applies to the ECD students with whom I work. They attend courses that would lead to certification in a less than consistent pattern. There are often terms when barriers will infringe on their registration in a course. In subsequent terms, when these barriers are alleviated, they return to the program.

Influence of Gender

Women do face educational obstacles based on gender. McGivney (1993) believes that "although barriers to education for women have been itemized and identified, the fact that women still cite the same obstacles after a decade of attention to access issues renders their repetition essential" (p.xi). These obstacles are "interrelated and mutually reinforcing" (McGivney, 1993, p.11).

McGivney (1993) outlines a specific set of barriers in relation to women as adult learners. She claims that "women encounter a wider and more complex range of constraints, although their impact varies according to other factors which interact with gender to shape women's experience and the way they are treated in society" (p. 8). She discusses three broad clusters of barriers that are quite similar to Cross's (1981) trio. They are personal and domestic constraints, psychological constraints, and structural constraints (McGivney, 1993).

Some of the obstacles for women are the result of cultural processes that affect women's opportunities but do not apply to men. These include gender role socialization, gender discrimination, marital and family status, role conflict between home and career, and occupational stereotyping (McGivney, 1993). McGivney (1993) claims that the impact of these processes varies according to individual circumstances. It is my contention that these processes are of even greater influence in the field of childcare, where dispositional, situational and institutional barriers are compounded by socio-political contextual barriers. Here the caring nature of the work is not fully understood or recognized by society.

Caring. Caring is defined by Baines, Evens and Neysmith (1991) as the "mental, emotional and physical effort involved in looking after, responding to and

supporting others" (p.11). In our western society women do most of this work. This caring work is largely invisible. It is not considered a part of our current definitions of labour, leisure, and parenting (Baines, Evans and Neysmith, 1991). In the home this caring work is unpaid; in the workplace it is poorly paid and under-valued (Baines, Evans and Neysmith, 1991). The "pattern that poorly paid women provide care to venerable populations has been evident throughout the development and expansion of health and social services in Canada" (Baines, Evans and Neysmith, 1991, p.15). It is commonly suggested that day care workers subsidize the cost of child care through their poor wages.

This idea is supported by research by Wimbush (as cited in McGivney, 1993), that states that obstacles to education for women operate within societal ideologies that exacerbate the constraints. These ideologies include the construction that motherhood is symbolized by self denial (a good mother devotes all her time, energy and resources to the needs of her family), the gender division of labour where caring roles are the women's responsibility, the unpaid status of housework and "the low social priority attached to the social needs of children and their carers in the provision of public amenities, facilities and services" (p.18).

On another level, women's participation in work-related education is affected by labour market conditions and occupational structures (McGivney, 1993). This is particularly true for the Early Childhood Development field with its low pay, high demands, and predominance of female workers. Although there is a reported shortage of trained day care workers in Alberta (Beach, 1998; Schom-Moffat, 1992),

this lack of supply has not caused the demand that would lead to subsequent higher pay levels that would occur in other market sectors.

Although ECD students share many similar characteristics and can be grouped together by their work in one particular field, it is important to realize that there are diversities within this group as well. McGivney (1993) suggests that we cannot speak about training opportunities for women as if all women are alike. This is true of ECD students as well. They vary in age, race, level of educational attainment, health, ability, and marital status. There are also differences in attitudes, concerns, aspirations, and needs (McGivney, 1993). Research by Hayes (1988) on Adult Basic Education students suggests that, within certain populations, there are sub-populations that experience different barriers. It will be interesting to see if any such pattern emerges in the ECD students. Will those students attempting to complete Level 2 training experience different barriers than those attempting to complete Level 3 certification? Will other sub populations or groupings of students be evident?

Models of Participation

The study of participation in adult education has typically been divided into two distinct groups, those who approach participation from a psychological position and those who take a societal view. Since Houle's (1961) classic study of motivation, research in North America has typically focused on the individual perspective (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). His research shifted the focus of study from the "tendencies of large groups and classes" to the "decisions of individual men and women and the motives behind those decisions" (Courtney, 1985, p.133 as cited

in Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). Since then, most studies on participation have focused on the psychological aspects of motivation, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours.

Previously, participation had been viewed from a more sociological perspective. This view explored the connection between participation and the hierarchical structure of communities. Research in this area examined a link between social participation and participation in adult education (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). This line of inquiry into participation and barriers continues to be active in Europe and Great Britain today, an example being the work of Benn (1997).

For the purpose of this literature review, six models of participation were examined. They are the Congruency Model (Boshier, 1973), the Psychosocial Model (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982), the ISSTAL Model (Cookson, 1986), the Chain of Response Model (Cross, 1981), Rubenson's (1985) Expectancy-Valence Model, and the Adult Persistence in Learning Model as proposed by MacKinnon-Slaney (1994). They are described below.

Boshier's Congruency Model

Following on Houle's (1961) study of motivation, Boshier (1971, as cited in Merriam and Caffarella, 1999), devised a forty item Education Participation Scale (EPS) to help predict participation. The scale has been tested and has been found to be a reliable measure of people's motivation for participating in adult education (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999).

His seven-factor typology (1991, as cited in Merriam and Caffarella, 1999), includes: communication improvement, social contact, educational preparation,

professional advancement, family togetherness, social stimulation, and cognitive interest. This search for answers to the "why" question is valuable as it sheds light on the "why not" question.

Boshier (1973) then went on to devise the Congruency Model to help predict participation and persistence (as cited in Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). This model explains participation in terms of the interaction between individual factors and social factors. It proposes that participation and persistence are driven by how an individual feels about him or herself and the match between the individual and the educational environment. This match is mediated by social and psychological variables, and sub-environmental variables (class size and transportation) (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999).

Psychosocial Interaction Model of Participation in Organized Adult Education

This model developed by Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) is called the Psychosocial Interaction Model of Participation in Organized Adult Education. It points to the relevance of social-environmental forces and socio-economic status in the adult's decision about whether to participate or not. Their model has two phases: the pre-adulthood phase and the adulthood phase. They propose that each phase is composed of factors which influence and predict participation.

The pre-adulthood phase is composed of factors that contribute to the socialization of the person as an adult learner, such as individual and family characteristics like intelligence, father's level of education, socio economic status, and preparatory education. The adulthood phase is made up of six components including: socio-economic status, learning press, perceived value and utility of adult

education, readiness to participate, participation stimuli, and barriers. Each of these components will have a high, moderate, or low influence on the person's decision to participate (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999).

The ISSTAL Model

The ISSTAL (interdisciplinary, sequential specificity, time allocation, life span) Model by Cookson (1986) reflects a continuum of participation from factors that have a general influence to factors that have a specific influence on one's decision to participate.

Contextual factors like climate, topography, and social structures are considered to be of lesser influence on this scale. More weight is given to sociodemographic factors like age, education, and occupation. Midway on the model are four interactive components: personality traits, intellect, retained information, and attitude. Of most influence on the continuum are situational variables that reflect the person's most immediate situation (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999).

The Chain of Response Model

Cross's (1981) conceptual framework is called the Chain of Response or COR Model. She says "participation is not a single act but a chain of responses based on an evaluation of the position of the individual in his/her environment" (Cross, 1981, p. 124). Cross's model was originally intended to help predict participation patterns and is primarily a psychological model with emphasis on the individual.

Her seven-point chain begins with Point A, the individual's own assessment of whether achievement in an educational endeavour is possible. This combines with

Point B, the person's own attitudes about education. Point C in the model is the importance the individual places on their goals and the expectation that participation in education will help them attain these goals. At Point D, Cross incorporates life transition events into her model, as those events and changes that all adults face throughout life. Points E and F are environmental factors that can determine participation. If responses all along the chain are positive the result will be Point G-participation (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999).

The Expectancy-Valence Model

Rubenson (1985) proposes a model of participation based on Expectancy-Valence. His model of Recruitment and Barriers was designed to understand the individual's decision making process about participating in adult education. He contends that people who do not see participation as a means of meeting their needs and/or who do not have faith in themselves as learners probably will not participate. Thus the decision to participate is a combination of the positive and negative forces within the individual and the environment.

The Adult Persistence in Learning Model

A more recent model that applies to participation research is called the Adult Persistence in Learning Model (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). This is a hybrid model, like many of the others, that borrows from other models. It focuses on individual issues, learning process issues, and environmental issues, and is designed to guide counselling services for adult learners.

Each of these models has contributed to an overall understanding of participation in adult education. Each model attempts to describe the interaction

between the individual and the environment as the main influence on participation. Each also assumes that the individual has some control over the decision to participate or not. It is probably possible to take any of the models and apply it to a group of day care workers for "fit " or application. Instead of selecting a specific model, however, I looked for aspects in each model that would support the contention that barriers work within a socio-political context to impede access to adult education. These aspects are described below.

Courtney (1992) believes, that to understand why adults participate in education, researchers must address both the psychological and the societal context. He further states that "adult learning rests on individual interest and initiative. It also emerges from a particular kind of society at a particular moment" (p. xv). Each of these models poses an interaction between the individual and his/her environment.

Based on my examination of these models, I noticed two types of factors or constructs that support the notion that barriers do not act in isolation from the social environment. They are referred to in slightly different ways in each model, but generally are referred to as contextual factors or the social environment, and the social background/roles. For example, contextual factors are recognized in the ISSTAL model proposed by Cookson (1986) as a general influence on participation. He includes the social climate, culture, and social structures in this factor.

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) discuss the idea of social forces in their research on barriers. They state that barriers are created and maintained by social forces. Strong pressure to conform can be exerted on the individual by institutions, persons, and groups in the individual's social environment. In the Darkenwald and

Merriam Model of Participation (1982) they discuss a factor called the "learning press." It is defined as the "extent to which one's total current environment requires or encourages further learning" (p. 142). For ECD students there is a press to complete their training to meet the certification required by Children's Services. This pressure is mediated by the lack of financial incentive to acquire additional training and the costs associated with courses.

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) and Rubenson (1985) mention membership and reference groups as factors that influence participation in adult education. Rubenson (1985) defines a member group as a group of which the person is an acknowledged member. He uses the family, political, or religious groups as an example, where there is a sense of shared norms. A reference group, according to Rubenson (1985), is one whose norms are utilized by other groups, which are not acknowledged members. Few day care workers are affiliated with professional organizations (Beach, 1998 and Schom-Moffat, 1992). This could mean they experience less influence to participate in adult education from their peers.

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) refer to the effect of social role on participation in adult education. They propose that if a person holds a social role that does not reflect "personal efficacy" outside the home environment he/she may lack confidence in entering an educational context. Social role is also recognized as a factor that influences participation in the model of participation proposed by Cookson (1986). As noted in the introduction, the social role of the Alberta day care worker is not generally highly regarded. This, in conjunction with low personal efficacy, may act as a barrier for this population.

Even with the connections made in these models to the social context, they are still predominately oriented towards the individual's decision of whether to participate or not. Courtney (1992) criticizes this orientation stating "most research fails to do justice to the environment or social context in which the activity takes place" (p. xv). I think it is essential that the socio-political environment in which the barriers to participation for day care workers currently operate be considered. Understanding the social context in relationship to the characteristics of barriers may provide a clearer picture of the way obstacles present themselves to day care workers.

Barriers to Participation

When we look at patterns of participation and at the research that has been done in this area, we can observe that many of the participation models proposed by researchers include factors related to barriers or deterrents to participation. All of the six models of participation described here include this construct. Scanlan and Darkenwald (1984) state that "the construct of deterrents or barriers occupies a central place in theories of participation" (p. 155).

Because adults give a multitude of reasons for non-participation, various classification schemes have been used to bring some order to the research (Scanlan and Darkenwald, 1984). Reasons for non-participation in adult education have been clustered into categories or groups of barriers by several researchers. Beginning in 1965, Johnstone and Rivera (as sited in Merriam and Caffarella, 1991) listed ten potential barriers to participation. They went on to create two categories of barriers: "external or situational" barriers and "internal or dispositional" barriers.

Cross's Framework of Barriers

Cross (1981) followed this initial work by grouping 24 non-participation items into three categories of barriers: dispositional, situational, and institutional.

Dispositional barriers. She defines dispositional barriers as "those related to attitudes and self perceptions about one self as a learner" (p. 98). Examples of dispositional barriers for adults include feeling too old to learn, lacking interest in learning, or lacking confidence in own ability to learn. Cross (1981) believes that survey research has probably under-represented this category of barrier.

Cross (1981) believes that there are methodological problems that lead to the under-representation of dispositional barriers. It is easier to say that the cost of the course is too high or that one is too busy to take a course rather than to admit that you are too old, not interested, or lack the ability to complete a course. In asking respondents to say why others have not taken a course they more readily cite dispositional barriers. However, for themselves they cite situational barriers like time and cost. Thus, the importance of time and cost barriers may be exaggerated in the research (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982). This is also emphasized by Rubenson (1985) who states that decreasing tuition and increasing leisure time may not necessarily lead to an increase in participation in adult education.

Situational barriers. Situational barriers are "those that arise from one's situation in life at a given time" (Cross, 1981, p. 98). In research studies these types of barriers tend to be the most frequently cited. Lack of time and lack of financial resources are the most frequently cited examples of this type of barrier (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982).

Cost usually is reported as a significant barrier to participation in adult education. Low-income groups were far more likely than higher income groups to mention cost as a barrier (Cross 1981). Women are more likely than men to cite the cost of education as a barrier (Cross, 1981; Darkenwald and Valentine, 1985). Women often lack the personal resources to finance their own education, and are reluctant to spend family money on their own needs (McGivney, 1993). When managing tight household budgets, women place family and children's needs above their own educational needs.

Men are reimbursed for educational expenses are by their employers more often than women (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). It is difficult for women to obtain financial assistance towards their education, especially if they are studying part time (McGivney, 1993). Women also struggle to pay not only the tuition for courses but to cover the cost of the additional expenses that are associated with education like travel, child care, books, and supplies (McGivney, 1993).

There are also reporting problems associated with cost. Cost is hard to study using the survey method, as adults who cite costs may have no idea how much courses actually cost (Rubenson, 1985). Also willingness to pay is not the same as the ability to pay (Cross, 1981; Rubenson, 1985).

The availability of child care is a situational barrier that causes significant problems for women between the ages of 18-39 years (Cross 1981). Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) reported that child care and family problems are a greater deterrent to women than men. As noted by McGivney (1993) women's participation in education is greatly affected by family responsibilities. Day care workers, like other

mothers, have the same difficulty finding care for their children while they attend school. Many bemoan the fact that they must leave their own children to be educated on how to care for someone else's child.

Transportation is a significant barrier for poor people but rarely for the middle class or middle aged (Cross, 1981). In McGivney's (1993) research on British women the lack of a personal vehicle and inadequate public transportation were reported as situational barriers. Women in that study also indicated that fear for their personal safety and worry about travelling at night acted as deterrents to participating (McGivney, 1993).

Institutional barriers. Institutional barriers, according to Cross, "consist of all the practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities" (1981, p. 98). She found five main structures erected by institutions that influence participation. These include: scheduling of courses; location of institution and transportation issues; lack of practical, relevant or interesting courses; procedural problems and time requirements; and lack of information about programs and procedures (1981, p. 104). Institutional barriers are ranked second in importance by Cross to adult learners.

Cross believes that providers of adult education subconsciously raise these barriers. Recent literature on institutional barriers suggests that many institutions are responding more appropriately to the needs of adult learners with more flexible scheduling of courses and increased support services on evenings and weekends (Larson, 1991). However, not all barriers are in the direct control of the educational institution. "Many barriers are outside the realm of the provider and represent the

core of disadvantage which is difficult to break down except by social services, social change and community development" (Lowden, 1990, p. 41).

Institutional constraints can be intimidating for women students. "Negotiating the maze of bureaucratic procedures is daunting to many women" (McGivney, 1993, p. 31). In Britain, women students may also get caught between the conflicting criteria and procedures of two unconnected sectors, education and social services (McGivney, 1993). This is not unheard of in Alberta as well, as women are moved off social assistance and into retraining programs. Women in these situations must have a certain level of confidence and knowledge about these two systems to negotiate through the policies and requirements.

Deterrents to Participation

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) proposed another typology for deterrents to participation. It also includes situational and dispositional barriers. They label dispositional barriers as "psychosocial" obstacles, which are evidenced by beliefs, values, attitudes and perceptions about education or about oneself as a learner. They then subdivided Cross's category of institutional barriers into two groups: institutional and informational barriers.

Darkenwald, working with a number of different researchers, has gone beyond these typologies and developed a list of deterrents to participation that was factor analysed to show the structure of reasons underlying non-participation (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). The DPS (Deterrents to Participation Scale) has been adapted for use with the general adult population (Darkenwald and Valentine, 1985) and with a group of allied health professionals (Scanlan and Darkenwald,

1984). Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) called for modified or specially developed DPS instruments to be developed to measure the deterrents for distinct sub populations (p. 185).

Subsequently, Hayes (1988) used the scale with low literate adults. It was also used with US Air Force enlisted personnel (Martindale and Drake, 1989 as cited in Merriam and Caffarella, 1991) and on Adult Basic Education Students (Hayes and Darkenwald, 1988 as cited in Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). This study on day care workers should help inform the research on deterrents to participation by identifying key barriers in this distinct population.

The Complexity of Barriers

Based on research on barriers over the last three decades, we can now list numerous factors that influence student participation in adult education. We can also describe some of the general characteristics of barriers. For example, barriers to education overlap with motivation, demographics, and access issues (Lowden, 1990). Barriers have been identified that range from individual/psychological to external/social barriers (Lowden, 1990).

Survey research on barriers assumes that the participants are consciously aware of their behaviour towards adult education and can articulate it for the purpose of research (Cross, 1981). "Direct information from students about reasons for non completion can shed further light on retention patterns" (Perin and Greenberg, 1994, p.169). Research gives a generalized picture of what people *say* deters them from participating. However, the perception of a barrier is very influential, whether the barrier actually exists or not (Cross, 1981). Rubenson's Recruitment Paradigm

(1977) suggests that actual experiences, needs, and environmental factors are less important in determining behaviour than how they are perceived and interpreted by the potential learner (as cited in Kerka, 1986). The impact of a barrier on participation is influenced by the learner's perception of its magnitude (Kerka, 1986).

Barriers seldom appear in isolation. There is an implicit complex interaction between barriers (Lowden, 1990). Bird (1997) states that the adults in her study described more than one factor or an accumulation of circumstances that prevented their continued participation. Individual barriers can be formed or reinforced by external or societal influences (Lowden, 1990). The relationship among barriers appears to be cylindrical in nature, with external and internal barriers affecting and interacting with each other (Lowden, 1990). Barriers may operate in a hierarchical fashion, with some barriers being so influential (like severe social and educational disadvantage) that they prevent adults from even considering educational opportunities so that lesser barriers never arise (such as lack of information on provision of courses) (Lowden, 1990). An individual's motivation can allow him or her to overcome daunting barriers that prevent others in similar circumstances from participating (Lowden, 1990). This suggests that the impact of a barrier on participation behaviour varies according to individual characteristics and life circumstances (Kerka, 1986).

Barriers may impact adult students at various stages of the educational process, for instance at the level of access, actual participation, or on ability to complete a course (Pithers and Lim, 1997). MacKinnon-Slaney (1994) agrees,

stating that issues of concern to adult learners are sometimes resolved and/or sometimes resurface or exert pressure in different ways at different times throughout the adult life cycle. Thus, guidance and counselling are needed by adult students at many points in their programs (McGivney, 1993).

We have less information on the complexity, inter-connectedness and the invisible nature of barriers to adult education. Research to date has shown the range and variety of some existing barriers, but does not always illuminate how they operate (Lowden, 1990).

Ecological Systems View of Barriers

An approach that may provide a useful framework for examining the complexity of barriers, their interconnectedness, and how they operate is the ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory views the individual within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels in the surrounding environment. This environment is not static but is ever changing. There is a reciprocal influence throughout the various levels. Barriers are interwoven through out these relationships, levels and systems.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) posed four levels of systems in the environment. They are the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem, which operate concurrently in society. This framework places a day care worker in the centre of these systems. The microsystem level comprises the settings and environments with which a day care worker has direct contact such as home, work place, family, etc.

The next level is the mesosystem, which is composed of the links and relationships between two or more microsystems. An example for a day care worker are the relationships among one's home, one's work environment, and the educational institution. For example they may be trying to attend classes in the evening without the support of their spouse, or their employer may require them to work until 6:00 p.m. while classes are scheduled by the institution to begin at 6:30.

The exosystem comprises formal sectors in society that affect the lives of day care workers even though they may have no direct contact with them. Located at this level are governmental policies, institutional policies, laws, and social, health, and educational systems. For example, the implementation of levels of certification by the provincial government, although done in consultation with the field, directly impacted day care workers careers. This legislation made education a requirement for day care workers rather than a choice. Another example is the recent cabinet shuffle in Alberta, which replaced the former Minister and Deputy Minister responsible for the Day Care Branch of Alberta Family and Social Services.

The macrosystem is the outermost level. It consists of the values, beliefs, customs, and resources of the dominant culture. In this layer the patterns or frameworks for the lower levels are established. Ideologies of the dominant culture can influence day care workers at the microsystem level. For example, in Alberta it is a widely held belief that it is the individual family's responsibility to raise children, that it is not a social or community responsibility. Thus at the exosystem level the government is hesitant to use taxpayer's dollars to fund a public day care system. At the mesosystem level this leads to day care centres operating in a quasi

market place model, where the user pays for the service. The ability of the user to pay in this market place directly effects the level of staff salaries.

I propose that the barriers to education for day care workers in Alberta operate on and between each of these levels. For example, those barriers labeled by Cross (1981) as dispositional (like attitudes towards education or perception of self as a learner), operate at the microsystem level. Situational barriers, such as lack of time, or the inability to afford courses, could be influential at the microsystem and the mesosystem level. Institutional barriers, like course hours or restrictive entrance policies, are found at the exosystem level. Barriers at the macrosystem level appear to be more invisible barriers and relate to opportunity and access. An example for day care workers is the lack of value that society places on their work. Because of this belief there is little support from employers or from government departments in terms of resources or finances for workers to better their education.

I agree with Rubenson (1998) who now believes that research on participation has been preoccupied with motivation and emphasizing the individual aspects of the decision to participate. He claims that societal aspects have been ignored or minimized in previous research. "Structural factors and/or public policy decisions are not directly addressed but are treated as a vague background when explaining whether or not an individual will participate"(Rubenson, 1998, p.2). The realization that these factors in themselves can be barriers is often ignored and that the societal processes that govern these structures are not part of the theories on participation. Rubenson (1998) encourages us to include structural factors and to analyze the interactions between them and the individual.

Courtney, McGivney, McIntyre and Rubenson (1998), in some of their latest thinking about participation, are proposing a new understanding of participation in terms of the "Ecology of provision." This idea is based on "an ecological analysis that sees participation patterns as the result of an interplay of government funding regimes, provider cultures and strategies, the demands of adult learners clienteles and the character of the community being served" (Courtney, McGivney, McIntyre and Rubenson, 1998, p. 313). They discuss how broad political and economic factors shape the ecology of provision.

Using the ecological framework helps us to see barriers more holistically in the current environment in which day care workers live and work. It becomes evident that there are a broad range of factors influencing participation in education that may go beyond the individual's or even the educational institution's control or influence. An ecological model also helps us to see more clearly the relationship between the day care worker, the work place, the college, the provincial government's certification program and the values and beliefs of Alberta society.

Understanding that barriers are operating at all levels may lead to clearer identification of strategies and supports required at the different levels to remove the obstacles. Action may have to be taken on or across levels to promote access to education, from the individual, to the workplace, to related systems (like Employment Insurance), to governmental policies, to the value of educated day care workers, to society as a whole.

Summary

In reviewing the literature on barriers, it is evident that they are strongly linked to motivation, participation and access to education. The research provides a general set of perceived barriers to education helps to identify certain characteristics of these barriers. Barriers have also been classified in a number of ways by various researchers. This study examined the barriers as perceived by selected day care workers using the framework developed by Cross (1981). By applying an ecological systems view, we show that the current socio-political environment in this province works in conjunction with these perceived barriers to influence day care workers participation in training. A description of the methodology for this study is described in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents information on how the study of perceived barriers to Early Childhood Development (ECD) education was conducted. A review of the research problem is followed by a description of the participants. The research design and the procedures for the focus group and the survey are included. The construction and the content of the survey are explained. Ethical considerations are addressed.

Review of the Research Problem

The purpose of this research was **to identify the perceived barriers to early childhood development education as experienced by selected day care workers.** The research was intended to identify perceived barriers that are situational, dispositional, and institutional in nature (Cross, 1981) as well as sociopolitical barriers.

Population and sample

The population is Alberta daycare workers who have not achieved Level 3 certification from Alberta Children's Services, Day Care Staff Qualifications Branch. Based on statistics provided by Day Care Staff Qualifications (March 2000) out of 5954 employed day care workers in the province of Alberta, only 1414 currently hold Level 3 certification. The remaining 3540 day care workers have not yet achieved Level 3 certification. It was assumed that this group has experienced some

obstacle(s) to achieving certification. The study was focused on the perception these participants have of the barriers.

The sample was selected based on a mailing list of Alberta day care centres provided by Alberta Children's Services, Day Care Staff Qualifications Branch. Each day care centre on their mailing list (562) received one survey. Due to privacy issues the survey could not be mailed directly to individuals who do not have Level 3 certification, so the covering letter asked that the survey be passed on to any staff person in their centre that met this criteria. Additional surveys could be photocopied as needed.

Research Design

This research was designed to use both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Creswell (1994) calls this a "between methods" approach (p. 174). He claims "it is advantageous to the researcher to combine methods to better understand a concept being tested or explored" (p. 177). There appears to be a strong argument for using the between methods approach. Each different data collection method provides information from an individual perspective; thus combining them may provide a full picture of the phenomenon (Krathwohl, 1998).

The premise of triangulation also applies here. Krathwohl (1998) and Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) describe method triangulation as using different methods to assess the same aspect of a phenomenon. The intentional use of multiple methods helps strengthen the validity of the research results (Greene, Caracelli, and Graham, 1989). Information from one source helps to interpret the meaning of information from another source (Krathwohl, 1998). Grey and Costello (1987) state

this idea clearly. "Quantitative methods can establish the degree to which perceptions are shared, but uncovering the perceptions themselves must be done naturalistically" (p. 12). In discussing the contrast between qualitative and quantitative designs, Leedy (1993) also refers to the discovery orientation of qualitative research and the verification orientation of quantitative research.

In an article by Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989), five purposes of mixed method design based on the examination of 57 mixed method evaluations are outlined: triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion. According to Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) development involves the "sequential use of qualitative and quantitative methods, where the first method is used to help inform the development of the second" (p. 260). Mixed method research is used for the purpose of expansion of knowledge when mixing methods adds scope and breadth to the study (Greene, Caracelli, and Graham, 1989).

After careful consideration of various research methods, I considered a mixed method, two-phase design to be an effective and efficient means of conducting this research. These data collection techniques were selected because they are technically adequate (reliable and valid), and they are practical and ethical. These methods suit the time and resource constraints of this study. Each of these methods has inherent strengths and weaknesses. By using this variety of methods I received information that ranged from very broad to very specific perceptions of the barriers that currently exist. This approach helped to garner the appropriate information to address the research question and the sub-questions.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Ethics

A main assumption of this research is that day care workers in Alberta are motivated to continue their education through Early Childhood Development courses, but that barriers stand in their way. For the purpose of this research, it was also assumed that participants are able to identify and accurately report the barriers to ECD training that they have experienced.

The childcare workforce in Canada is made up of many sectors. These include day care workers, preschool/nursery school teachers, family day home providers, out of school care workers and nannies. This research will focus only on the day care worker segment of the workforce, specifically, those who are currently employed in day care centres in Alberta and are trying to achieve Level 3 certification from the Day Care Staff Qualifications Branch of the Alberta Government. Only their perceptions will be examined.

There are a number of weaknesses evident in this research. Time and limited resources were a factor. The self-developed survey tool required for this study is subject to inherent weakness. Published findings from research on the Alberta and Canadian day care workforce is based on the best available data. Although it is hoped that this research will have a broader application, it may not be generalizable to other contexts or populations because of its specificity to Alberta and to the field of early childhood development.

It was the goal of this researcher to conduct this research in a manner that protected the dignity and the well being of the participants. The research proposal for

this study was submitted to the Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta and received approval.

The Two-Phase: Mixed Method Design

A two-phase design (Creswell, 1994) was used in this study. Phase one (qualitative) consisted of a focus group for response generation about the perceptions of barriers to ECD education. These responses were used to inform the second phase. According to Krathwohl (1998), focus groups are often used as "an initial step in questionnaire development to learn what to ask and how to ask it" (p. 295). Phase two (quantitative) involved the creation of a questionnaire from the focus group information and delivery of the questionnaire to the sample of day care workers. A description of both phases of the research follows.

Phase One-Qualitative/Focus Group

This section provides information on the qualitative focus group phase of the study. It includes a brief review of the use of focus groups, information on the focus group for this study, and a description of the methodology employed in the focus group sessions.

Literature on Focus Groups

Focus groups are specialized group interviews (Krathwohl, 1998). Although focus groups originated in market research, they are now widely used in education and social science research (Witkin and Altschuld, 1995). They are usually utilized to learn how a group that represents a target population reacts to something presented to them (Krathwohl, 1998) and help to deepen and broaden the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Wilson, 1997).

This method is used to encourage self-disclosure among participants (Wilson, 1997). Focus groups can explore participants' perceptions, ideas, and attitudes. They encourage and utilize group interactions. (Wilson, 1997). It is believed that focus groups can yield the same information as private interviews although responses may be more censored (Krathwohl, 1998). One strength of focus groups is the apparent face validity of the data generated (Wilson, 1997).

Focus Group Parameters

As focus groups are typically small, I planned to have 8-10 participants. The participants were selected on the basis of shared characteristics with the target population of this research. Criteria for participation in the focus group were specified. Day care workers were invited to participate if they held a level of certification of less than Level 3, were interested in obtaining Level 3 certification, and were currently working in a day care setting. These criteria were initially determined in a telephone conversation with potential participants. If they met the criteria and were willing to participate, a letter of invitation was mailed or faxed to them (Appendix A). They also received information on their ethical rights for participation in the study (Appendix B). They were reminded that their participation was strictly voluntary and that they could choose to participate at their own level of comfort.

The Focus Group Moderator

The leadership of a focus group is important. The leader must be non-judgmental, create a supportive group atmosphere, be able to keep the interview process on track, and be a good listener (Witkin and Altschuld, 1995). For the

purpose of this research, an impartial facilitator was used to lead the group. This allowed me to take an observer role. It also decreased some of the effect of the researcher knowing the participants in an instructor-student relationship.

The Moderator for the focus group for this research study was selected based on the following criteria: a) his/her educational background, a university degree at the Masters degree level b) moderator experience, including facilitating focus groups for other research projects, experience teaching at the postsecondary level, and experience with group facilitation process c) personal characteristics, including being friendly, expressive and articulate, having a sense of humor, being empathetic, and a good listener and d) authority based on years of experience in the daycare field, and experience with daycare workers in other research projects.

The moderator and the researcher met three times prior to the actual focus group session. In these meetings the purpose of the research was clarified, the participants of the focus group were described, the focus group questions and agenda were finalized. Time was taken to ensure clarity of the roles between observer and moderator.

Methodology for the Focus Group

The following briefly outlines the structure of the focus group. The structure was based on Witkin and Altschuld (1995), with input from my advisor and from the focus group moderator. The focus group began with introductions. I explained the purpose of the focus group and provided a short summary of the goals of the study. The next period of the focus group session centered on discussing the research question and sub- questions, moving from broad to more specific areas. The focus

group concluded with a summary and thank you to participants. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their remarks in the focus group. The focus group lasted 2 hours.

The participants in this research were reassured that they were at minimal risk due to their participation because the information sought was not of a highly personal nature, but rather their perceptions of the obstacles they have faced in attempting to complete ECD training. Participants were informed of the availability of the research results.

To ensure that the discussion from the focus group was accurately documented, I took notes during the proceedings. Also, the participants were asked for permission for the discussion to be recorded on audiotape. The tape helped with analysis and ensured accuracy of interpretation. The tape was not used for any other purposes than the research described here.

Focus group structure. The focus group questions were designed to address each of the research sub-questions as a means to answer the main research question. The sub- questions were designed to be used as a prompt for additional barriers if the moderator thought it was necessary. For a copy of the focus group agenda see Appendix C.

Question One

Think back over the last year, what has affected your ability to attain the courses or level of certification that you wanted to get?

Sub question #1 Situational barriers

Sometimes situations arise that make it difficult for day care workers to take courses/training even if they want to. Have you experienced any situations like this in the last year?

Sub question #2 Dispositional barriers

Some day care workers worry that they can't complete the course requirements (keep up with readings, do assignments etc). How do you feel about your own ability to succeed in courses?

Sub question #3 Institutional barriers

What are your experiences in the last year with the staff certification process from Alberta Children's Services?

What are your experiences in the last year with the institutions that offer ECD training programs?

Sub question #4 Socio-political context

Do you believe that the larger views of society about day care have acted as a barrier to you achieving your Level 3 certification?

Question Two

If you were designing this survey, what kinds of things would you be asking other day care workers about barriers? (How can we collect information about and measure the barriers?)

Question Three

What is your number one barrier to attaining Level 3 certification?

Question Four

What are your suggestions on how to address the barriers or help make it easier for you at achieve Level 3 certification?

The Focus Group

There were six participants at the focus group. All were female. Three of the participants were in their 20s, one was in her 30s, and two were in their 40s. Three were currently registered in a course leading to Level 3 certification and three were not. In terms of certification level there were a variety of levels represented at the focus group. One participant had Level 1 certification and one participant had a Level 2 Exemption. Two participants held Level 2 certification and two held Level 3 Exemptions. Three were employed in a non-profit agency and three were employed in a private agency.

The focus group was held on February 24, 2000 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., in a centrally located day care centre. This was deemed a suitable location so that the survey was not seen as being attached to any particular postsecondary institution and as a less intimidating space for participants. The researcher and moderator arrived early to set up the room. Two tables were pulled together to facilitate a group discussion. The moderator was seated at one end of the table, while the researcher observed from the other end. The moderator recorded the main points of the discussion on a flip chart so participants could see their responses. The tape recorder was set up so that all voices were captured on tape. Refreshments (coffee, tea, and juice) and fruit and cookies were provided to participants.

As participants arrived they were asked to fill out a name card indicating their first name only. They were asked to fill in a Background Information sheet

(Appendix D) and to sign the Informed Consent Form (Appendix E). They were asked to help themselves to refreshments while others got settled.

At about 7:10 the researcher thanked everyone for coming and introduced herself and her role that evening. She described her role as being an observer and recorder. She clarified that she was there as a researcher and not in her role as ECD instructor. The moderator then introduced herself and described her role. She specified that her role was to facilitate the discussion but to not actively participate in it. The researcher then described the participant's role by encouraging them to share their own perceptions about the barriers that they may have experienced. She then gave a brief outline of the research project and its goals. One participant asked about how the information that they provided would be used. She wanted reassurance that the information would get to those who could actually make the changes necessary to address the barriers. These introductory steps took approximately 10 minutes.

The Moderator then asked the group to respond to question 1. As they spoke she jotted their responses on the flip chart paper. After some discussion around question 1 the moderator back-tracked and had the participants introduce themselves and tell what level of certification they were currently working towards and a bit about their experience so far in trying to achieve level three certification. This opening discussion lasted almost 50 minutes and touched on a number of the categories of barriers that the sub-questions were designed to address.

After this very informative opening discussion, the moderator asked the group to consider what they would ask other day care workers if they were the ones

designing the survey. There was not a strong response to this question and so we spent only five minutes on it.

For question 3 the moderator asked the participants to go around the table and identify what their number one barrier to achieving Level 3 certification was. This took about five minutes.

The moderator asked the participants for their ideas on addressing the barriers that they have experienced. A ten minute discussion took place around question 4.

Next the moderator backed up a bit to pick up on some earlier comments. She posed sub-question 4 related to societal views and sociopolitical barriers. Approximately ten minutes later, the moderator referred the participants back to sub-question 1, asking them to tell us about any anxiety that they may have felt about returning to school.

As we reached 8:45 it appeared to the facilitator that the group had reached the point of completion. She then gave a brief summary of the information and asked for any further input. A few additional comments were made. The focus group wrapped up at 8:50 p.m. with the researcher presenting the participants with a thank you note and a small honorarium.

After tidying up the focus group site, the researcher and the moderator met to debrief the session. They agreed that it had been a success based on the fact that the participants had so willingly shared their perceptions of the barriers. They felt excited by the thoughtfulness and insightfulness of the responses that were generated. They also felt at the time, that the categories of barriers were adequately

covered with input given by the participants and that the information generated would be useful in designing the survey.

Analyzing the Focus Group Data

The researcher assembled all the written information/observations she had noted during the focus group, the flip chart paper that the moderator used to record the participant's responses, the audio tape of the session and the notes made during the debriefing including the observations of the moderator. Then information reduction, inference and analysis began as the data were examined for information related to the research question and sub-questions and the development of the questionnaire for the quantitative portion of the study.

Phase Two: Quantitative/Questionnaire

This phase of the research involved a questionnaire derived from the focus group sessions. This section of the thesis will describe in general the content and the construction of the questionnaire. The piloting of the questionnaire is described. Ethical considerations are outlined here. Details on the development of the tool, and the collection and analysis of the data are provided.

The Construction and Content of the Questionnaire

The content of the questionnaire was derived from the information generated in the focus groups, from a review of the questionnaires used in previous participation research and from the results of previous research on barriers to participation. The outcome of the focus group was carefully analyzed and construction of the questionnaire was influenced by the data gathered in the focus group. The content was formed around the research sub-questions including the three

types of barriers described by Cross (1981) as situational, dispositional, and institutional as well as the sociopolitical barriers described in the research proposal. It took many drafts to finally reach a satisfactory survey (see Appendix F).

The focus group was particularly useful to informing the development of this questionnaire. I had a sense of the barriers that the day care workers may have been experiencing but hearing it in their own words was very revealing. I was struck by how the participants used feelings to describe the process associated with trying to achieve Level 3 certification. As a result I added another open ended question to try to capture this in the larger population of the study. Barriers associated with field placement policies and English language requirements also came out of the focus group and thus questions were added to the survey to address these issues.

A review of Darkenwald's (1985) Deterrents to Participation Scale (DPS) was undertaken to see if there was applicable content. Of his forty item scale, 14 items that were generic enough in nature were included in the study of Alberta day care workers. The items were re worded to fit the scale and format of the questionnaire. The items were lack of confidence in ability, feeling unprepared for the work, applicability of courses, lack of time for studying, inconvenient course times and inconvenient course locations. Other items similar to the DPS scale included: unwillingness to give up the time, lack of support from family, inability to pay for miscellaneous expenses, inability to afford the cost of courses, lack of financial support from my employer. Also included were factors like lack of child care, family commitments, and health issues.

The selection of a scale for use in the survey was not easy. The scale had to complement the statements without causing confusion for the respondents. The wording of the questions was also carefully considered. Initially many of the statements in the survey were worded in a negative manner for example "I cannot afford to pay for courses." If the student selected a response of "No" did that mean no they cannot afford the courses? If they selected a response of "Yes" did that mean yes they cannot afford the courses? Negative wording of the questions seemed to lead to double negative responses. In the end the statements in the survey were worded in a positive manner so that participants could respond more accurately and with less confusion.

The structure of the questions included multiple choice, a three point interval scale (yes, sometimes, no), and ranking. A place to respond with short answers was also incorporated into the design. According to Witkin and Altshuld (1995) the most effective questionnaires ask respondents for informed opinions based on personal experience and background. Thus the questions focused on the respondent's perceptions of the barriers they had experienced in attempting to complete ECD training and in achieving Level 3 certification.

Consideration was given to keeping the questionnaire relatively short and straight forward in design. The goal was to keep the length of the survey to four pages to meet mailing requirements and to make it less intimidating and easier for participants to complete. The initial plan for the survey had six sections including demographics, dispositional, situational, institutional, sociopolitical barriers and a

section with open ended and ranking questions. This plan remained fairly consistent over the planning and pilot stage.

Section I of the survey consisted of demographic questions. There was some debate as to whether these questions should be placed at the beginning or the end of the survey. Some say that these "easy" questions help ease the participants into the more difficult portions of the survey. Others think that it is more effective to catch the participant's attention by getting to the "important" and "interesting" questions immediately and leave the standard questions to the end. In an attempt to balance these views and to not overwhelm the participants, 9 demographic questions were placed in Section I of the questionnaire. Two additional demographic questions were placed in the last section of the survey.

The demographic questions were included in the hope that some comparisons could be conducted. Originally I had planned for six standard types of demographic questions. The six original questions were: age, gender, level of certification, current course registration, current role, and employment auspices. This eventually was expanded to 11 questions, including which institution they attended, whether they lived in a rural/urban setting, their level of interest in attaining Level 3 certification, their motivation for trying to achieve Level 3 certification and whether or not they required child care while they attended courses. Questions related to wages and benefits were not included in this research as a recent study of Alberta day care workers could provide this information (Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange, and Tougas, 1999).

Section II consisted of six statements related to dispositional barriers with a scale of yes/sometimes/no. Students were asked to read the statement and select the response that best described how they felt about participating in early childhood courses. This section of the survey related to information gathered from question 1 and sub-question 2 of the focus group discussion.

Section III focused on situational barriers, as per question 1 and sub-question 1 of the focus group discussion. Participants were asked to respond to nine statements, by checking yes/sometimes/no. Because cost is often mentioned as a barrier to participation, the researcher wanted to get a better sense of how poorly paid day care workers managed to finance the cost of courses. A question about the strategies they use to help pay for the cost of courses was included in this section of the survey.

Section IV focused on institutional barriers. This relates to the information generated in the focus group through question 1 and sub-question 3. There are two parts to this section. The first part had 10 statements related to barriers based on their experience with their local college. In the second part participants were asked to reflect on their experience with Day Care Staff Qualifications. Again students were asked to read a set of four statements and check the response from a three point scale (yes/sometimes/no).

Section V provided four statements that relate to the sociopolitical barriers that day care workers may face. The barriers in this section maybe less direct in nature than other barriers but still may contribute to the difficulty that day care workers have in achieving Level 3 certification. This section of the survey was based

on the discussion that occurred around question 1 and sub-question 4 of the focus group.

In Section VI, the participants were asked four open-ended questions. Initially they were asked to describe their number one barrier. In the first draft of the survey I had provided a list of barriers and asked them to pick their number one barrier from the list. Some feedback during the pilot phase suggested that wording the question that way suggested that I already knew what the barriers were. That format wouldn't offer the participants enough opportunity to give input so this question was changed to a more open ended format as per the focus group question 3.

The other open ended questions in the final section asked for any additional feedback on barriers, their feelings about achieving Level 3 certification and suggestions for removing the barriers they have experienced (focus group question 4). At the end of this section are the two final demographic questions on age and gender.

Reliability

This questionnaire was designed to measure the perceptions of Alberta day care workers. No equivalent tool was found in the literature on participation or in the field of Early Childhood. One survey by Darkenwald (1985) entitled "Deterrents to Participation Scale" was examined for its potential applicability. Permission from the author was granted to adapt the survey and a number of generic barriers were included. To find out whether this questionnaire would remain consistent over time

can only be determined by further research in this field by this or other researchers using the same questionnaire.

Validity

Content and face validity of the questions in the questionnaire was determined by the researcher and through the pilot process.

Pilot testing

Pilot testing was an important step in verifying the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. It also helped to identify possible problems with terminology, clarity of the questions, and the length of time it would take the participants to complete. In this study, an ECD training program was selected as the site of the pilot. A pilot draft of the questionnaire was shared with five faculty members. The feedback from the ECD staff was very useful, specifically in clarifying the instructions and getting clarity in the wording. One section in particular, the sociopolitical barriers, had to be put into simpler terms. Useful input was also received from all three thesis committee members as the survey reached the final draft stage.

At the end of the focus group, I had gathered the names of people who had shown an interest in piloting the survey. I faxed them a copy of the draft survey and asked them for feedback. Unfortunately none of them responded. This may have been due to my request to respond to the survey within 48 hours. Perhaps it was not possible for them to respond in such a short time frame. Another explanation could be that as they had already had the opportunity to provide input during the focus group they may have had nothing further to add. Or they may have felt that the

content of the draft survey clearly covered the discussion at the focus group so they didn't respond.

Data Gathering

After piloting, and once the survey was deemed satisfactory, the final draft of the questionnaire was proofread and then copied for distribution. In the spring of 2000, 580 copies of the survey with stamped reply envelopes and covering letters were delivered to the Day Care Staff Qualifications Branch for distribution to each day care centre in Alberta. The surveys were mailed the week of March 13, 2000. I had asked for the surveys to be returned to me by March 31, 2000. In order to encourage completion, the respondents had two options available to return the survey, either by the stamped reply envelope or by fax.

It was difficult to track the distribution and return of individual surveys, as I had no way to identify which survey went to which day care centre. The surveys had been numbered so that if I had received two or more with the same number, I could assume that the staff photocopied the survey so that more than one staff member in that particular centre could complete the questionnaire. I kept track of the number of surveys that went out and the number that I got back.

The questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter (see Appendix G) describing the research and the process. Participants were given a telephone number to call for additional copies of the survey. Directions for completing the questionnaire were included along with the procedures that would ensure the participants anonymity. For example, they were asked not to put their names on the survey. The information provided by participants was kept confidential.

The Treatment of the Returned Questionnaires

The researcher was advised by personnel from the Department of Educational Policy Studies for procedures related to coding and data input for the statistical analysis of the questionnaire. Once surveys were returned to the researcher, the answers to the closed ended questions in Sections I through V were given a numerical code. The responses to the open ended questions in Section VI were analyzed by theme based on the types of barriers indicated by the respondents. Later these themes were categorized based on Cross's (1981) categories of barriers.

The researcher coded the data and inputted it. Chris Prokop from the Department of Educational Studies verified the data. It was then analyzed using SPSS Version XI. The resulting data were analyzed statistically using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages).

Summary

The methodology for this research was a mixed method, two-phase design. Phase One is qualitative and used a focus group to generate information. This information was used to guide the development of a quantitative questionnaire. This survey tool was distributed in Phase Two to Alberta day care centres.

Information obtained from both of these phases was analyzed to seek information that would address the research question and the sub questions concerning the perceived barriers to ECD training in Alberta. The analysis is presented in Chapter four. A discussion of the research and any recommendations arising from it are provided in the final chapter of the research report.

Chapter Four

Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter details the results of the study by describing the perceived barriers to education that Alberta day care workers have experienced. In Section I, the information generated at the focus group is discussed. The results from the questionnaires completed by Alberta day care workers are provided in Section II. How do these results compare to other research on barriers? This discussion leads to the final chapter of this thesis and a summary of the results.

Section I

The Focus Group Results

The focus group (as described in Chapter three) resulted in a discussion that identified a number of barriers. These barriers could be described as dispositional, situational, institutional, and sociopolitical in nature and agree with those identified in the literature (Cross, 1981; Darkenwald and Valentine, 1985). The information is not presented here in full. Responses as they appeared in the observer's notes, the moderator's flip chart, and from the audio tape recording of the group interview are summarized by category of barrier in Appendix H.

The results of the focus group became the foundation of the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire are discussed below.

Section II

The Questionnaire Results

The Sample

The population for this research was Alberta day care workers who have not achieved Level 3 Certification from the Day Care Staff Qualifications Branch of Alberta Children's Services. Recent data from this department indicate that of 5954 day care workers in the province, 3540 have not yet achieved Level 3 Certification. In an attempt to reach this population a copy of the questionnaire was sent to each of the 562 day care centres in Alberta. One hundred and eighty one respondents returned the questionnaire. This is a fairly low rate of return. Sending a reminder or follow up letter could possibly have increased the return rates. Unfortunately the mail out procedure precluded this. However, the researcher believes that the returned questionnaires should not be discounted as a valid description of the patterns and categories of barriers perceived by Alberta day care workers.

The following information describes the demographics of the respondents. For ease of reporting, the demographic information is shown in Table 4-1, by frequency and percent of responses.

Participant Characteristics

The questionnaire had a total of 11 demographic questions located in the first and last sections of the instrument. These questions were included as a way to gain a fuller picture of the actual sample of day care workers responding to the questionnaire. Discussion follows the table.

Table 4-1 Characteristics of the Questionnaire Sample

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Q1. Level of certification (n= 165)		
Level 3	5	3
Level 3 Exemption	31	19
Level 2	52	32
Level 2 Exemption	36	22
Level 1	37	21
Other	4	2
Q2. Current Course Registration (n=161)		
Yes	72	45
No	89	55
Q3. Institution Attended (n=147)		
Grant MacEwan College	69	47
Lethbridge Community College	23	16
Career College	20	14
Grande Prairie College	15	10
Mount Royal College	14	10
Red Deer College	9	6
Bow Valley	6	4
Keyano College	4	3
AVC-Portage College	3	2
Lakeland College	3	2
Medicine Hat College	3	2
Other	15	10
Q4. Current Role (n=164)		
Day care worker	122	74
Day care director/assistant director	40	24
Day care owner/operator	9	6
Other	13	8
Q5. Employment by Auspices (n=162)		
Nonprofit	76	47
Private	80	49
Unemployed	3	1
Q6. Employment Setting (n=154)		
Urban	127	83
Rural	27	18

Q7. Interest in Achieving Level 3 Certification (n=163)		
Very interested	90	55
Partially interested	54	33
Not interested	19	12
Q8. Reason for Obtaining Level 3 Certification (n=146)		
To increase earnings/salary	107	73
For personal/professional development	99	68
To advance career	96	66
To obtain a diploma	77	53
To meet licensing requirements	72	49
To meet employer expectations	53	36
To meet job expectations	47	32
Other	4	3
Q9. Need for Child Care (n=161)		
No	113	70
Yes	48	30
Q10. Age (n=164)		
Under 20	0	0
20s	53	32
30s	61	37
40s	32	20
50s	18	11
Q11. Gender (n=164)		
Women	161	98
Men	3	2

Q1. Level of Certification

The responses to the first question show that the largest group of respondents to the survey currently holds Level 2 certification (32%). Level 2 certification requires a minimum of postsecondary course work equivalent to 30 credits. These respondents are on their way towards gaining Level 3 certification, the highest level of certification required in Alberta. This indicates that the respondents have had experience with postsecondary education and may well have experienced barriers in the past. It does show that a portion of the day care worker population is overcoming

obstacles and successfully completing coursework towards Level 3 certification. The number of respondents with Level 3 certification is small because the survey was not designed for those who already possess Level 3 certification. The instructions provided with the questionnaire asked for only those who had not yet achieved Level 3 certification to complete the survey.

Q2. Current Course Registration

The survey was timed to be mailed out in mid academic term so it could capture day care workers in courses leading towards Level 3 certification. Respondents were asked to answer whether they were currently enrolled in a course leading to Level 3 certification. If they were not currently registered they were asked to explain why. At the time of the survey, more respondents were not enrolled (55%) in a course than were enrolled (45%). A number of respondents answered "no" even though they were registered in a course leading towards Level 2 Certification (N=8). Also two "no" respondents indicated that their course had just finished. Eight of the respondents who answered "no" stated they were waiting for the next available course. Nine "no" respondents indicated that they planned to register but had not yet done so.

The main reason given for not being currently enrolled was cost (N=33). This may be an indication of the "stopping out" pattern that was evident in studies of women and educational barriers (Bird, 1997; Gaskell and McLaren, 1990; Kerka, 1995). This pattern reflects the phenomenon of the women's willingness to pursue further education, but their attendance is interrupted when barriers arise. Usually, when the obstacle has been removed they will return to their studies.

Q3. Institution Attended

The survey did attract respondents from all institutions in the province, although there were not enough respondents from each institution to allow a comparative analysis of barriers. The majority of respondents had attended a course(s) at Grant MacEwan College in Edmonton.

Q4. Current Role

The majority of those responding to the questionnaire (74%) are currently day care workers.

Q5. Employment by Auspices

Of the 162 respondents who answered this question, 76 (47%) indicated that they were employed by a non-profit day care agency. Eighty respondents (49%) indicated that they were employed in a private/commercial day care agency an almost even split between employment auspices. This split does not represent the real provincial picture, as it is estimated that 70% of Alberta day care centres are commercial operations (Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange, and Tougas, 2000).

Q6. Employment Setting

When asked whether they worked in a rural or urban community, 127 (83%) of the 154 respondents indicated they worked in an urban setting. Twenty-seven respondents (18%) worked in a day care located in a rural community.

Q7. Interest in Achieving Level 3 Certification

The respondents indicated a very strong interest in achieving Level 3 Certification. Between partially interested and very interested over 88% of respondents indicated a desire to achieve Level 3 certification. This is a very

significant finding with the majority of respondents caring about certification and higher credentials.

Q8. Motivation for Achieving Level 3 Certification

The day care workers were asked why they wanted to attain Level 3 certification. Almost ¾ of the respondents (73%) said to increase earnings/salary, followed by 68% who said personal/professional development, or to advance their career (66%). This is consistent with previous research on motivation for participating in educational opportunities (Gorback, 1994). It is interesting to note that day care workers state that increasing their earning is their main reason for achieving Level 3 certification even though the remuneration for it is often minimal.

Obtaining a diploma was the fourth highest reason for returning to school. This may be of interest to the colleges that offer ECD programs. It appears that for some learners the formal credential is of less significance.

Q9. Need for Child Care

When asked whether they had children who required care while they attended EC courses only 48 (30%) said "yes." The majority of the respondents (113 or 70%) responded "no." This result is consistent with the national You Bet I Care Research that indicated that 29.8% of care givers had children under the age of 12 (Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange, and Tougas, 2000). As the day care workforce is made up almost entirely of women, the assumption is that caring for a dependent child is also part of their role. An explanation for these data may be that the women with young children do not stay in the workforce. The high cost of child care and the low wages

may force them out of day care employment and contribute to the high staff turnover rate.

Q10. Age

There were no respondents under the age of 20. Thirty-two percent (N=53) were in their 20s. Thirty-seven percent (N=61) of the respondents were in their 30s. Twenty percent (N=32) of the respondents were in their 40s and 11% (18) of the respondents were in their 50s. Alberta wide, it is reported that 30% of day care staff are under 25 years and 21% are over age 45(Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange, and Tougas, 2000).

Q11. Gender

Of 164 respondents, 98% (N= 161) were women and 2% (N=3) were men. This predominance of women is an accurate reflection of the gender make up of the early childhood field in Alberta and in Canada. Other research studies have confirmed this phenomenon (Beach, 1998). Unfortunately, there is not enough male representation in the sample to do a comparative analysis of the barriers.

To summarize, a typical respondent to this questionnaire is female and works in an urban centre. She is likely to have achieved Level 2 certification and to have attended classes at Grant MacEwan College in Edmonton. She is at least partially interested in achieving Level 3 certification, and sees this as a way to increase her earnings, although she was not enrolled in a course at the time of the survey. She is as likely to work as a day care worker in a non profit setting as she is to be employed in a commercial agency. It is unlikely that she requires child care for her own children while she attends classes.

Dispositional Barriers

The table below indicates the frequencies and percentages for perceived dispositional barriers to achieving Level 3 certification. These barriers pertain to the individual's attitude about education, confidence in ability to succeed, and past educational experience as a predictor of further participation. The statements are worded positively to avoid confusion with double negative responses.

Table 4-2 Dispositional Barriers

Statement	Yes		Sometimes		No	
	f	%	F	%	f	%
I have health issues that prevent me from taking courses.	3	2	18	12	128	86
I have time for all the homework.	35	22	87	55	35	22
I have the energy needed to take courses.	55	35	81	52	20	13
I feel prepared for postsecondary education.	113	73	34	22	8	5
I have enjoyed past educational experiences.	123	69	33	21	2	1
I have confidence in my ability to succeed.	130	83	27	17	---	---

The day care workers who responded did not indicate a high degree of dispositional barriers. From their responses, we can assume that dispositional barriers did not have a major impact on their participation in courses related to achieving Level 3 certification. The majority evidently feels prepared physically and mentally for taking courses, although for many it is sometimes hard to find the extra energy that taking courses requires or to find time for homework.

In the literature (Cross, 1981; Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982; Scanlan and Darkenwald, 1984), negative past educational experiences are seen as a deterrent to participating in further educational opportunities. For this group, past educational

experience appears to be viewed positively and therefore should not act as a barrier.

In contrast to other studies of women's participation (Hall and Donaldson, 1997; McGivney, 1993; Taylor, 1999), 83% of these respondents rated themselves as very confident in their ability to succeed in courses. This level of confidence may be attributed to already having succeeded in previous courses and feeling positive about their abilities to handle the academic requirements of additional courses.

Situational Barriers

This portion of the questionnaire was designed to examine the day care workers' perception of situational barriers. These barriers are a reflection of what is happening in the day care worker's own life situation. As can be seen in Table 4-3, the highest reported situational barrier is cost, with 49% of the participants reporting that they did not have the money to pay for courses. Along with the cost of courses, almost half of the respondents (44%) reported not having enough money to pay for the other expenses associated with taking courses like texts and transportation.
In comparison, a study done by Valentine and Darkenwald (1990) on deterrents to participation in adult education, identified five clusters of people categorized by the way that they are deterred from participating in adult education. The five clusters were; people deterred by personal problems, people deterred by lack of confidence, people deterred by educational cost, people not interested in organized education, and people not interested in available courses. Based on the findings of this research

study, many day care workers would be clustered with those deterred by educational costs.

Table 4-3 Situational Barriers

Statement	Yes		Sometimes		No	
	f	%	F	%	f	%
My level of written/spoken English allows me to succeed in courses.	142	92	8	5	5	3
My employer encourages me to take courses.	125	70	17	11	12	8
I have the emotional support of my family to take courses.	109	71	39	25	5	3
I have transportation to and from the courses.	107	60	29	18	19	12
My family, community, and social commitments allow me to participate in courses.	90	58	51	33	13	8
I have time to participate in courses.	60	38	65	41	32	20
Besides tuition, I have money to pay for costs like texts, child care, parking, and transportation.	41	23	47	30	69	44
I have child care available so that I can attend a course.	36	27	26	19	21	16
I have money to pay for courses.	33	21	45	29	75	49

We can infer from the data that time to participate in courses was also a relevant barrier. Respondents to this survey felt that their level of written English was not a barrier to their success in courses. This question was added to the survey after information shared in the focus group suggested that this is an issue for some day care workers. The level of written/spoken English indicated in these results may not be representative of the entire day care workforce as it is unlikely that those with poor English skills or with English as a second language responded to the survey.

The vast majority of the respondents felt supported by their families and their employers in their quest to achieve Level 3 Certification (71% and 70%

respectively). This implies that the respondents probably have an essential support system in place.

It is interesting to note that transportation and child care were not noted as highly influential barriers. This is in contrast to earlier research by McGivney (1993) and Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) who found that for women these were significant situational barriers to educational participation.

As low wages are a reality for day care workers and cost is often cited as a significant barrier, the next section of the questionnaire attempted to have respondents identify the ways that they manage to cover the costs of courses. See Table 4-4 below, where the frequency and percentage of responses are listed. The responses do not add up to 100% as day care workers were allowed to check all the strategies that they have engaged in to help pay for course fees.

Table 4-4 Strategies Used to Finance Courses

Strategies used to finance courses (N=151)	f	%
I pay for the courses myself.	106	70
I receive financial support from my employer to cover the cost of courses.	51	34
My family helps to cover the cost of the courses.	30	20
I apply for student bursaries and awards from the colleges	24	16
I work two jobs to help pay for courses.	22	15
Other	19	13
I have a student loan to cover the cost of courses	11	7

The majority of the respondents (70%) said that they paid for courses themselves. Only 34% said that they received financial assistance from their employer to pay for the cost of course. One-fifth (20%) also turned to their families for financial assistance. Only 7% had a student loan to help cover tuition fees. This could be due to the high number of part-time students who are less likely to be

eligible for a student loan and is consistent with research by McGivney (1993) on women and educational barriers.

Institutional Barriers

This section of the questionnaire measured institutional barriers. Table 4-5 reports on college level barriers and Table 4-6 reports perceived governmental/certification level barriers. Discussion follows each table.

Overall, day care workers felt that they knew how to, and could easily obtain, clear course information. Informational barriers do not appear to be significant in this study. Respondents (75%) felt strongly that the content of the EC courses was relevant to their jobs. They also felt that college instructors treated them with respect (77%).

Table 4-5 Institutional Barriers- Experience with local College

Statement	Yes		Sometimes		No	
	f	%	F	%	f	%
I know how to get information about course offerings at my local college.	118	78	28	18	6	4
The content of most courses is relevant to my job.	114	75	33	22	5	3
College instructors treat me with respect.	114	77	32	22	3	2
It is easy to obtain information about courses.	104	70	41	28	3	2
Information about courses is clear.	101	57	48	31	4	3
Courses are scheduled in locations that are accessible to me.	97	64	34	22	21	14
My local college supports me as I try to reach Level 3 Certification.	72	55	42	32	17	13
Courses are scheduled at times that are convenient to my schedule.	53	38	70	47	24	16
College field placement policies allow flexibility.	39	33	42	35	39	33
Courses that I have registered in have been cancelled due to low enrollment.	28	20	24	17	87	63

Course scheduling is not a barrier for 38% of the respondents. The majority reported that courses were scheduled in accessible locations. College field placement policy is viewed as flexible by 39% of the respondents. For another 33% of

respondents field placement policies do not appear to be flexible. Based on these results, it appears that college/institutional barriers are minimal for Alberta day care workers.

The next section of the survey examined the process of governmental certification for day care workers for perceived barriers. The findings are shown in Table 4-6 below.

According to these results, respondents understand the certification process for Alberta day care workers and know where to go for information on the process. Almost 2/3 of the respondents felt supported or sometimes supported by Day Care Staff Qualifications.

Table 4-6 Institutional Barriers- Experience with Certification Process

Statement	Yes		Somewhat		No	
	f	%	F	%	f	%
I know where to obtain information on the certification process.	123	79	23	15	10	6
I understand the certification process for day care workers in Alberta.	117	74	31	20	11	7
I feel supported by the policies and procedures of Day Care Staff Qualifications in obtaining Level 3 certification.	53	35	58	38	41	27
My experience and previous qualifications were recognized by Day Care Staff Qualifications and were applied towards my Level 3 certification.	44	30	33	22	72	48

Almost half of the respondents (48%) did not feel that this Department recognized their experience and previous qualifications. These respondents may perceive this as a deterrent or disincentive to achieving Level 3 certification. Unfortunately due to the general nature of the statement on the survey it is difficult to conclude whether this is a real or perceived barrier. There are many issues

associated with assessing equivalency of training like assessing foreign credentials, relevance of previous education to current studies, assessment of non credit training, lack of child related education and the value of previous work experience.

This is an important issue in the field that is loaded with emotionality. Many in the field fail to recognize the importance of the ever-growing knowledge base that is essential in supporting quality experiences for children in day care programs. In the ten years since day care qualifications came into legislation in Alberta, important research on brain development (Shore, 1997; Steinhauer, 1998), alternative approaches like Reggio Emilia (Hendrick, 1997), developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997), and other Canadian research such as the cost vs the benefits of quality care (Cleveland and Krashinsky, 1998) has made significant contributions to our understanding of child development and best practice for children in group care settings. This specialized knowledge is imperative for those working with young children. The field must understand and articulate that this knowledge and its application sets them apart from providers of unregulated care.

Sociopolitical Barriers

This section of the survey was designed to assess whether broader sociopolitical phenomenon, like societal attitudes, acted as barriers to achieving Level 3 certification. In Table 4-7, participants were asked to state whether the statements had an effect on their attempts to achieve Level 3 certification. The frequency and percentage of responses are shown below.

Table 4-7 Sociopolitical Barriers

Statement	No effect		Some effect		Great effect	
	f	%	F	%	F	%
The Alberta government provides too little funding to day care centres.	10	7	17	11	125	82
The public sees your job as just babysitting.	23	15	28	18	105	68
Day care is not viewed as a necessary part of the whole education system.	28	18	59	39	65	43
As a whole our society does not value children.	36	24	59	39	57	38

There was agreement with all the statements. The majority of respondents (82%) agreed that their decision to continue their education was affected by the lack of government funding to day care centres. Many (68%) also felt that the public perception of day care workers as babysitters had some effect on their decision to achieve Level 3 certification.

The Voices of Day Care Workers

Section VI of the questionnaire was constructed with four open ended questions, to allow respondents to comment on their perception of any barriers they have experienced. The comments were analyzed, and then categorized by category/theme.

Number One Barrier. Table 4-8 below shows the frequency of the responses to the top nine barriers reported as being the number one barrier to achieving Level 3 certification. Overall, survey respondents listed money as the number one barrier. Concerns about money were categorized into three main themes: high cost of courses (N=42), low salary/pay/ benefits (N=39), and lack of financial

support or funding to pay for courses (N=14). These three groups totaled 95 responses, indicating a consensus that the ability of day care workers to pay for courses has a real impact on their participation in courses towards achieving Level 3 certification.

Table 4-8 Self-Reported Number One Barrier

Barriers as described by survey respondents (252 responses)	F
1. Money- high cost of courses	42
2. Money- low salary, pay, benefits	39
3. Time- lack of	35
4. Field placement- loss of income due to	21
5. Lack of worth/value of education compared to cost	15
6. Money- lack of financial support or funding	14
7. Lack of recognition of previous education (by Staff Qualifications and/or by colleges)	11
8. Length of time it takes to complete on a part time basis	9
9. Course scheduling issues	8
10. Other e.g. distance to travel, age, demands of courses	50

The following quotes are examples of the respondents' sentiments regarding the cost of courses, low salaries, and the need for funding support.

- "Money is a HUGE aspect. At approximately $400 per course by the time I have finished between my boss and me, we will have forked out almost $10,000. I believe that with the high need of day cares in the world the government has an obligation to help out with cost."
- "Lack of funds. At $7.50 per hour there is not enough money to pay rent, buy groceries, prescriptions etc., transportation costs or any entertainment. Definitely not enough money to pay for continued education. This wage is poverty line."

- "The cost of the courses in comparison to the wages I will receive when I graduate does not compare. I will need two jobs to pay back my student loan, which will take years-not fair. I have second thoughts about continuing."
- "I do not have the financial barrier because my employer pays for my courses and texts. If my employer did not, I would not be able to take courses and therefore would lose my job."

After money, lack of time was listed as a concern. The following quote expresses a common feeling about this issue.

- "Time. Owning and operating your own centre, raising two children, spending quality time with your own children in their classroom, running a household is just to name a few. I continue to take one course at a time as best I can."

A concern of some respondents (N=21) was a program policy of some colleges that required students to do their field placement hours in an agency other than their place of work. When this occurs they must give up five weeks of salary, plus pay for the tuition. Because this can occur up to four times during their Level 3 training it poses a real barrier. Some day care workers reported that finding replacement staff while they did a field placement elsewhere was also a barrier.

Fifteen respondents listed their number one barrier as the lack of value/worth that is given to the field. This indicates that sociopolitical barriers are real and do impact the decision of whether to participate in courses leading to Level 3 certification or not. This theme was evident in the open-ended questions. The following comments give examples of this phenomenon.

- "The biggest barrier is "WHY". The profession of child care is not respected. It is under paid and over worked. A level 3 working as a teacher (not a director) makes little more than a level 1."
- "The government insists that each day care should have a number of trained, educated, and experienced staff and I agree. The first years of a child's life are the most important. However trained and educated staff are getting the same wage as Level 1 staff and they have the status of being a glorified babysitter. This concerns me and it is really affecting my decision to return to the ECE program."
- "Not a lot of wage enhancement or opportunity to move up in the job even with a level 3."

Overall, Alberta daycare workers indicated that money was the number one barrier to participating in courses leading towards Level 3 Certification, followed by time. Both money and time are considered situational barriers to education. These findings are consistent with other studies on barriers to participation (Cross, 1981; Darkenwald and Valentine, 1985).

Other barriers. The second open ended question asked participants for their comments on any additional barriers they may have perceived. There were 145 responses received. As noted in the open ended questions, money and time were rated as major issues. In this question, respondents referred to concerns about course scheduling and to the value/worth of the education in comparison to wages. Comments that reflect Alberta day care workers perception of barriers are below.

- "The cost of courses increases every year. Since I commenced taking ECE courses in 1996, a typical course has increased by $80.00. As I am only able to take one course per year by correspondence I would be paying an extra $2000 on courses by the time I finish my level 3."
- "It takes so long to get it that I ran out of incentives to be in school that long. My rewards in the end aren't great enough (small raise) to pursue the level 3 for 4 or more years. Why would any one go to school that long to still get paid peanuts?"
- "Finding time and energy-single mom- work a full time job plus being a full time parent! HELP!"
- "Canada needs standards across the country in regards to certification and other regulations. Provinces not accepting other province's certification is ridiculous. Children deserve to be treated well right across the whole country. Standards need to be the same. The pay is too low to be jumping though all these hoops."
- "Money. Although I can scrape together most of the money needed to pay for tuition and books, other areas of my life greatly suffer. Bills go unpaid and standard of life is lowered."

Feelings about Level 3 Certification. Question 3 in this section asked the respondents to briefly share their feelings about achieving Level 3 certification. The responses provided reflect the diversity that exists within the day care work force and highlights the differences in attitudes, concerns, aspirations and needs that McGivney (1993) has noted. Out of 146 responses, three main themes emerged. The first theme reflects the responses of a group of day care workers who are determined to overcome the barriers they perceive and achieve Level 3 certification. A second

theme of responses comes from a group who find themselves weighing the cost and benefits of continuing with ECD training, and the third theme reflects a group that does not consider further education necessary or beneficial.

The first theme (55 responses) belongs to day care workers who value the education they are receiving and are determined to complete their certification. As per Lowden (1990), this group's motivation may allow them to overcome barriers that prevent others in similar circumstances from participating. Here are some of their responses.

- 'I love learning and that is what I am doing through the level 3 (and 2) courses. I feel I am benefiting the children and enhancing the centre's reputation."
- "I feel a great deal of personal satisfaction and confidence being able to plan and implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum for young children. I have a sense of direction and enjoyment. This is all achieved through certification."
- "I believe it will be a great accomplishment if I do achieve my Level 3. It will be hard with all the factors involved but I am dedicated at this point in time."
- "I am really interested and excited about my Level 3, but sometimes all the frustrations make it hard to keep working on it."
- "When taking classes I have a lot of fun and learn many things that I bring back to my job. I also enjoy meeting other child care givers."
- "It is always great to learn new things and to go above and beyond to bring more to the children you care for on a daily basis."
- "I do it because it gives me great satisfaction to improve my work performance and knowledge."

- "I feel that it is important because I am learning more about being a more capable child care worker. Also, my career options become broader because of my higher level of education."

The second theme (29 responses) that emerged comes from day care workers who are trying to weigh the costs and the benefits of achieving Level 3 certification. This is a cautious group of day care workers who are thoughtfully weighing the pros and cons of further education in a field where there will be little economic pay off after a sizable economic investment in their education. This group will consider the cost benefit analysis and make a decision about their future career and educational plans based on their assessment of what can be gained or lost by staying in this field. Many will use their ECD training as a stepping stone to other related careers that carry better salaries and offer better benefits and working conditions. For this group cost will remain the biggest barrier. Their ambivalence is evident in the following statements:

- "I am not sure I will be staying in the day care field. There is not enough pay and you are not appreciated enough."
- "I think that it is important to strive for more professionalism. I've had wonderful instructors at college. I've learned so very much from my course. But I find it difficult with a baby, even with my husband's support. My job/boss is very discouraging because to save money she cut back on my guaranteed daily hours every day and cut several employer benefits. You sometimes wonder what's the use?"

- "The cost of the courses in comparison to the wages I will receive when I graduate does not compare. I will need two jobs to pay back my student loan, which will take years-not fair. I have second thoughts about continuing."
- "I would have no hesitation about completing my Level 3 certification if I received a better salary. This would enable me to work at one job, which would also allow me more time to work on courses. I would also be more efficient at my job as I would be more rested (working at the second job as well as raising a family is exhausting)."
- "While it seems a level 3 is valued the level of pay vs the work needed to achieve this level is not equal...and therefore it does not make sense to pursue extra qualifications for very little money."
- "The government and society do not respect us or give us credit for what we do each day. Those of us that do this type of work, do it because we enjoy it, not for the money obviously. To put in the hours that I do and run a centre with very high expectations to gain little or no respect by government member or society really annoys me. I am doing it for myself and for the community so clients can drop off their children and feel safe their child's needs are well met."
- "Exciting yet concerning. I believe that I can make a difference so believe in what I am doing. I am not in it for the money and do believe that our pay is an issue that needs to be addressed. I plan on continuing with my education and my goal is to achieve my masters. At this point in my life I am concentrating on educating the general public about what E.C. educators really do."

The third theme (28 responses) is from daycare workers who are unclear as to the value of the education itself. For this group it is difficult to see the merits of post secondary education for day care workers. In this resistant group, traditional views of working with and caring for children are strong. Unfortunately this view reinforces stereotypical societal beliefs that anyone who likes children can be a good day care worker. This group undermines the attempts of educators and Day Care Staff Qualifications personnel to raise the level of professionalism in the field by not recognizing the growing body of knowledge and expertise in best practice that has been developing in the early childhood field. Rather than acknowledge the specialized skills and knowledge needed, this group bemoans the fact that their experience alone is not enough for certification. For this group, the education itself is the barrier, and the legislated training gets in the way of them doing their jobs. Many of their comments reflect the view that caregivers do not need an education to care for children, or that the courses are a waste of time. Below are some examples of this type of thinking.

- "Level 3 certification has and always will be a piece of paper, although some crafts and programming are attainable through courses long term creative staff members usually possess these ideas already."
- "Due to day care wages, government regulations regarding education and societies stereotypical opinions of caregivers I have chosen to pursue a career in Social work".
- "I really don't feel that a Level 3 would know any more about child care than a Level 2 would know about it."

- "I am simply not interested."
- "I don't feel that I am learning anything new. I feel level 3 is a waste of time and money."

For those concerned about barriers, there is value in understanding these differences among day care workers. With differences in motivation so evident, solutions to barriers will have to be tailored to suit different segments of the day care population. For example, those who already sense the value of their courses may need a different level of support and encouragement than those who are struggling to find the value of the courses compared to the costs associated with the education.

Suggestions for Overcoming Barriers. The last open-ended question in this section asked participants for their views on how to reduce the barriers that they have experienced. There were many (217) creative responses. The suggestion that received the most responses (34) was the idea that financial support in the form of grants or loans be provided by the government to Alberta day care workers. This included ideas like apprentice like programs and course subsidies. The following quotes are indicative of these ideas.

- "Setting up a program to apprentice us so we could still earn money while we learn."
- "We need the government to at least supplement finances for those requiring financial support."
- "Provide money to day cares just for staff education to help day care pay more money to the staff going to school. Since the operating allowance got taken away my employer does not have the extra money to put towards helping to pay for."

- "Some type of staff funding for courses (is needed)."

Another popular solution (26) to the barriers associated with Level 3 certification is to increase day care workers salaries. Many were in favor of a government sponsored wage enhancement program. For example:

- "The wages do not encourage people to continue on in this field. I classify myself as a teacher for preschool children, but I get paid like a teen-age babysitter for the neighbor. I have education, 6 years experience, I do all my own planning and prep and I get the wages of a baby sitter who has nothing to offer."
- "The government needs to provide some guarantees (wages, positive recognition) to educated and experienced staff. Many colleagues have discontinued their education because of these barriers."
- "Perhaps a pay change would interest more competent long term staff to the child care field."

Many day care workers (23) favored a reduction in the cost of courses leading to Level 3 certification. Some (18) suggested that field placement be allowed in their place of work to overcome the problems of lost wages and replacement staff when they are required to complete a practicum out side their own work place. A couple of other suggestions related to field placement were to be paid during field placement and to decrease the length of the field placement.

Fifteen respondents suggested that access to correspondence or distance delivery courses would make it easy for them to complete their Level 3 certification.

A number of respondents wanted recognition from both the colleges and Day Care Staff Qualifications of previous education (13) and previous day care

experience (15). Some called for a broadening of the types of educational courses that are considered by Day Care Staff Qualifications as related to the field of Early Childhood Development.

A number of responses referred to the sociopolitical barriers. Respondents (12) called for increased recognition by the public and by the government of children and child care workers. Here are some quotes that relate to this theme.

- "I find the community and teaching professions especially have a very low opinion of what I do for a living (babysitting). I didn't go to college for 2 years and go into debt $15,000 to be called a babysitter! Sorry!"
- "This is a Canadian issue. We need to have a standard training certification course across the country."

Some respondents called for the colleges to be more creative and flexible in meeting student's needs. For example:

- "We also need the schools (all of them) to work together because they are all in for the same reasons, accept the certification from school to school instead of going against one another."
- "Offer more year 2 courses to choose from or double up on. Allow evening students to take day classes. Lessen the number of courses it takes to achieve Level 3."
- "Create a part time day program for 2nd year ECD similar to the part time day program already in place for first year ECD at GMCC. Please!"
- "Have more courses that could be taken as correspondence or distance learning basis. I wish there was a level 4."

Although the survey was essentially a quantitative tool, the open ended questions in Section VI provided a rich picture of the perceptions, attitudes and barriers that Alberta day care workers are experiencing. These comments gave a voice and more importantly a feeling to the experience of achieving Level 3 certification.

Summary

Chapter Four reported on the results of both the qualitative and the quantitative findings of this research project. Dispositional, situational, institutional and sociopolitical barriers have been reported by the sample of day care workers. What do the findings mean for day care workers, colleges and governmental certification? More importantly what do they mean for children and families and our communities? These questions are addressed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, And Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the research on barriers to achieving Level 3 certification for Alberta day care workers. The summary is followed by a discussion that helps make meaning of the research results for day care workers, colleges and the governmental certification department. What do these barriers mean for the children and families of Alberta? Recommendations for lowering the barriers and suggestions for further research close this final chapter.

Statement of the Research Problem

This research was designed to answer the following research question. *What are the perceived barriers to early childhood development education as experienced by selected Alberta day care workers and how can these barriers be addressed?* The research study employed a two stage mixed method design. As described in Chapter Three, the first stage consisted of conducting a focus group. The focus group was used as a foundation for the development of a survey questionnaire which was distributed to all Alberta day care workers to gather data on the perceived barriers to achieving Level 3 certification. The survey was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

Limitations and Delimitations

This research is impacted by a number of limitations including low response rate and instrument limitations. The self-developed survey tool used in this study is

subject to inherent weakness. The survey was not designed to address the whole child care sector, just to look specifically at employed day care workers who have not achieved Level 3 certification. Unemployed day care workers, those who have dropped out of training and those who have left the field are not included here. They may have significantly different perceptions of barriers.

The way the survey was distributed also contributes to the limitations of the research. The researcher had no way of tracking the surveys or following up to encourage additional responses. The surveys were mailed to day care centres rather than directly to individual day care workers (due to Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection restrictions). The person at the day care centre who received the mail may not have passed it on to staff without Level 3 certification, possibly contributing to the low response rate.

The low response rate also interferes with the opportunity to generalize the results of the study to a broader population. However, this does not discount the validity of the responses provided by the participants. In addition, the research was faced with time and resource limitations, which influenced the study.

Summary and Conclusions

This study has led to the conclusion that there are few barriers that day care workers cannot overcome when committed to completing their certification. The few barriers that do exist include dispositional, situational, and institutional as described by Cross (1981), however of greater importance are the broader, less direct barriers that are embedded within and between the relationships and structures in the day care workers environment. In this section, each research question and the corresponding

findings will be summarized. Additional conclusions that have been drawn from the research are noted.

What are the dispositional barriers perceived by day care workers?

It appears that dispositional barriers, those related to attitudes and self perception as a student, were less influential on Alberta day care workers than in other participation research. Respondents in this study indicated a high sense of confidence in their ability to succeed in courses. They report feeling physically and mentally prepared. In other models of participation, negative previous educational experience is often associated with non-participation. In this study, the day care workers reported positive previous experience with education. This could be due to success in earlier ECD courses, helping the participants to feel prepared and confident in their ability to succeed. The open ended questions did reveal some differences among the respondents in attitudes and feelings towards achieving Level 3 certification.

Conclusion #1- In terms of dispositional barriers, we can conclude from the survey responses that most day care workers are willing to obtain Level 3 certification. There will be very few barriers that this group cannot overcome in their quest to complete Level 3 certification

What are the situational barriers perceived by day care workers?

Although reported barriers were few, the situational barriers of lack of money to pay for courses and lack of time were the two most influential barriers to achieving Level 3 certification. Lack of money was identified in the open ended questions in three ways: the high cost of courses, low salaries/benefits, and lack of

financial support. The research found that 70% of the respondents had to rely on themselves to cover the cost of courses.

Barriers like lack of transportation and child care seemed to be less influential here than in other research on participation. This could perhaps be explained by the phenomenon described by Lowden (1990), as the hierarchical effect of barriers. For day care workers in Alberta, the barrier of cost is such a significant obstacle that other barriers do not seem to preclude or hinder those respondents from seeking Level 3 certification.

Also significant was the level of support that respondents reported. The majority felt that they had the emotional support of their families and their employees to achieve Level 3 certification. In previous participation research, this factor is a strong predictor of participation.

Conclusion #1- Consistent with Cross's (1981) previous research on barriers, it is concluded that Alberta day care workers perceive the situational barriers of lack of money and time to be most influential in achieving Level 3 certification.

Conclusion #2- Even though the majority of respondents are committed to achieving Level 3 certification and are positive about educational opportunities, they often have to make difficult financial decisions related to the earning potential in their chosen career and the legislated educational requirements. Based on the survey, responses to the open ended question and other recent Canadian research on day care salaries, it is easy to conclude that day care workers in Alberta cannot afford to pay for the cost of college level courses.

What are the institutional barriers perceived by day care workers?

Institutional barriers were looked at from two perspectives, the college level and the certification level. College level barriers were not significant in the close ended portion of the survey. Participants reported feeling able to easily access clear information about courses from the colleges. Course scheduling issues were also less influential than expected, with only 16% of respondents reporting that courses were scheduled at inconvenient times.

In the open ended section, the field placement policies of some colleges that require students to do practicum work outside the agency in which they are employed and a perceived lack of institutional transferability and cooperation came to light as issues for some day care workers.

The second set of institutional barriers that was measured related to the government certification process. Relatively little in the way of barriers was reported. Respondents indicated that they understood the certification process and could access clear information about it. The most strongly perceived barrier had less than half the respondents (48%) agreeing. They reported a lack of recognition for previous education and experience by Day Care Staff Qualifications.

Conclusion #1- This study is consistent in finding that many institutional barriers to education have been lowered. Some areas, specific to ECD education still need to be addressed if day care workers are to succeed. Factors that continue to act as deterrents are colleges that require field placement hours to be completed outside their place of work and lack of institutional transferability/cooperation. Public colleges have the reputation of being responsive to the community and to adult

learners. Although many colleges are working to find solutions to these issues there is still work to be done to help students succeed.

How does the social/political context, as perceived by day care workers, act as a barrier?

These types of barriers tend to be less direct in nature and therefore are a bit less concrete. The findings indicate that day care workers in Alberta are influenced by the sociopolitical context that surrounds them. They report that their decision to achieve Level 3 certification is greatly effected by lack of government funding and by society's lack of respect for their daily work with children.

In the open ended section of the survey a few respondents (15) cited the lack of value/worth associated with the field as their number one barrier. This again gives credence to the notion that societal structures do influence educational participation.

Conclusion #1- The sociopolitical barriers that were identified in the research led to the conclusion that, beyond the three categories of barriers identified by Cross (dispositional, situational, and institutional), lies a broader, less direct, albeit as significant, level of influence on participation. The research gives credence to the notion that barriers are embedded within and between relationships in the environment. The ecological model is a helpful framework here. The psychological and the sociological models of participation do not go far enough to explain the existence of barriers that are embedded in the relationships between the individual, her/his workplace, the community, the educational institutions, legislation and policy makers and the broader society.

Conclusion #2- The existing structures in society have not been recognized as contributing to the barriers that prevent day care workers from accessing educational opportunities. As a result, day care workers do not feel supported in the current sociopolitical environment in their attempts to achieve certification. Many feel that their struggle to comply with provincial certification requirements has largely been overlooked by government, colleges, day care operators and certainly the public.

Suggestions for Addressing Barriers

The majority of respondents felt that the Alberta Government had a role to play in easing the obstacles through programs like wage enhancement or educational grants.

Implications

That day care workers are committed to attaining training and that few barriers are interfering with this process is good news for children and families. The

link between high quality care and postsecondary education with an ECD focus is well-established (Beach, 1998; Kaiser and Skylar-Rasminsky, 1999). ECD education will help day care workers to learn new skills and knowledge to guide their work with children. Formal education will also help them to articulate this new knowledge and skills to others. For educators, this level of enthusiasm and determination is an opportunity to be responsive with quality education that meets their needs as adult, women learners. This next section will address some of the other implications arising from this data and what these implications mean to policy makers, educational providers and day care practitioners themselves.

Implications for Policy Makers

Alberta has the highest rate of staff turnover in Canada at 45%. This can only mean an unstable environment for children that may influence their health and well being. The shortage of trained staff has been acknowledged. In recent consultations between Alberta Children's Services and the day care community, the issue of lack of trained staff was raised frequently (D. Joslin, personal communication, March 8, 1999). This study has documented few barriers to achieving Level 3 certification, the implication here is that barriers to training are not significantly contributing to a shortage of trained staff or to high staff turnover rates.

Based on growing pressure from high staff turnover and shortages of trained staff, Day Care Staff Qualifications may feel pressured to reduce the levels of education required for certification of day care workers. It is important instead for government to be more vocal as to why these levels of qualifications are essential. The link between high quality care and higher government standards has been made

in past research (Beach, 1998). The government has a role to educate workers and parents as to why (based on current research) achieving Level 3 certification is important to the worker's career and in turn to children and their family's.

Pressure to accept other educational qualifications that lack an early childhood focus, as suitable for day care workers must be resisted. The Government should not succumb to pressure but fight to define for the public the work and the knowledge that is needed to support the growth and development of children in group care settings.

Government needs to work in conjunction with the field, the colleges, and professional associations to increase recruitment efforts to help ensure a stable, well educated, decently paid day care workforce in this province. The mandate of the Children's Services Department is "working together to enhance the ability of families and communities to develop nurturing and safe environments for children and youth" (Children's Services, 2000). This implies that the government does have a role in ensuring the quality of environment in day care centres. Policies should be in place to support day care workers who are working towards Level 3 certification.

Implications for Educational Providers

In terms of institutional barriers, the public colleges are facing increased pressure from private colleges. Past cuts to educational funding have driven up course tuition, further limiting educational access to low paid day care workers. Pressures to lower educational standards to compete are increasing. Colleges must address their practices in terms of today's trend to market driven education and to maintaining standards for ECD education. Recent research on ECD training should

assist in giving colleges a foundation for defining the level of education they are providing. This framework should assist in contributing to a national framework for ECD training in public colleges with a view to establishing transfer routes and prior learning assessment.

Alberta colleges are currently reporting decreasing enrollments in their ECD programs, while the high turnover rate of staff keeps the demand for trained staff high. There is increasing internal pressure on college programs to fill quotas and to meet accountability criteria established by Advanced Education Departments like Alberta Learning's Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). This, combined with the societal trend that emphasizes training opportunities in technology type pursuits, leaves a career like day care looking less appealing. The implication here is that without additional incentives to enter this field, the current strong backbone of ECD training programs may soon be in jeopardy.

Implications for Day Care Practitioners

Wages as they relate to the cost of courses remains an issue for the majority of Alberta day care workers and reinforces an educational barrier. Research has shown that wages are below that of other two-year diploma graduates and that wages do not reflect the level of responsibility that the job of a day care worker entails (Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange, and Tougas, 2000). Wages have been very slow to increase over time and low wages act as an impetus for high staff turnover in the field.

As discussed in Chapter One, there are a number of factors that influence the wages that Alberta day care workers receive. The factors are economic, political,

philosophical and societal in nature. The government withdrew direct funding to day care centres with the removal of the provincial operating allowance program in 1998. In essence this means that a user pay system is in place for families. Those who can not pay are eligible for a provincial subsidy. However, even fully subsidized parents cannot pay the full cost of a quality day care program. Parents cannot pay more and therefore day care staff salaries cannot rise. This relationship between day care fees and salaries creates an uneasy feeling. Parents who are responsive to the plight of day care workers feel they can not advocate for higher salaries on the day care worker's behalf, as higher salaries would only hurt their own ability to afford day care fees.

This situation reflects the neoliberal and neoconservative views of the provincial government. Families must operate independently with little, if any, support from the province. Rather than looking at the benefit to all society that quality affordable day care provides, individual families are left to fight it out in a day care market place that rarely meets families or children's needs.

Day care workers have not been a part of, or considered in, the policy making environment in Alberta and thus day care issues have not been given a central position on the political agenda. Many in the day care field feel that now is the time to be emphasizing the plight of day care workers. As government deficits are brought under control there is a new push to use public resources to fund programs for children and families. Tax payer's needs were addressed in the last Canadian Federal Budget, and many advocates are hoping that the National Children's Agenda will see renewed spending at the Federal level on programs for children and families. Day

care workers need to stay mobilized and participate in this important policy development.

Currently there is an Alberta-wide movement led by a group of associations to draw attention to the issue of wages and staff turnover in the child care field. Rallies have been held in both Calgary and Edmonton to draw attention to these issues. As stated in a recent study on day care and diversity, "Caregivers want more education. They are prepared to make a commitment, but need some kind of incentive" (Hewes, 1998, p. 32).

This press by day care workers is a positive sign. This normally reticent group has found an issue that can draw them together so that they can exert pressure on the political and social environment that surrounds them. As the government of Alberta debates how to spend huge budget surpluses, perhaps it is time for the voices of children and child care workers to be heard. If the government chooses to ignore these voices, the implications will be serious. An under-funded, demoralized daycare work force can not provide quality care to the children of this province. This leaves a generation of children at risk.

Recommendations for Lowering Educational Barriers

If we subscribe to the findings in this study, that barriers occur at various levels in the environment of day care workers, then suggestions to address those barriers must also occur at various levels. Below are some creative notions, some formal ones and some informal ones, that have emerged from this thesis. The recommendations are directed to policy makers, educational providers, and day care practitioners. Ideally these groups would work together cooperatively, with a shared

sense of responsibility to remove the existing barriers. Each group may lend their authority and their expertise to the process in a search for solutions that work for their community. These ideas are initial suggestions. Some will need further investigation and feasibility testing.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

#1. The government of Alberta must make a commitment to the children and families of this province. They must recognize the economic value of day care to the province in supporting a productive, efficient workforce. The commitment needs to take the form of sufficient funding within a well articulated plan and a policy framework for the children of Alberta. Government would be encouraged to look to other models of plans that place children and families at the centre of policy development and that ensure that all children have access to affordable quality care.

#2. As day care is under provincial jurisdiction, the government must intercede to stabilize and educate the day care work force. Help for the day care work force could come in many forms, including incentives for those who continue to acquire courses toward Level 3 certification as they are trying to achieve provincially mandated standards. In the past, government has been reluctant to provide funds to individual day care workers or day care owner operators to pay for their educational upgrading. Perhaps public Colleges could apply to a special Learning Department funding envelope similar to ACCESS or LEE funding that would then allow colleges to offer courses to day care workers at a subsidized rate. At the most their needs to be a wage enhancement program, at the least their needs to

be a system of assessing need that provides funds for education for at least the neediest portion of the day care workforce so staff can complete their training.

#3. A commitment needs to be made to making ECD training more accessible. Various government departments may need to work together to address work force training and retention issues, including the Ministry of Children's Services, Alberta Learning, and the Department of Human Resources and Employment, recognizing that any money invested now helps to ensure a successful and productive next generation of Albertans.

Recommendations for Educational Providers

#1. It is the role of the Alberta ECD programs to increase the awareness of the field, the public, and the government of the significant and essential knowledge base that effective day care workers must have and use to provide quality early childhood programs to children.

#2. Colleges must continue to link closely with the field for insight into how they can significantly improve student support services and reduce institutional barriers for this population of students. Local colleges should be encouraged to work with day care workers and associations in their communities to develop innovative community-based models of training that includes pre-service and professional development opportunities. Colleges (with support from Alberta Learning) can make a commitment to increase accessibility by: examining and evaluating the use of opportunities for distance/distributed modes of course delivery; addressing financial barriers to participation through increased bursaries, grants and fee subsidies; and increasing opportunities for Prior Learning Assessment. It is the role of the colleges

to provide a method for recognition of equivalency. They should work collaboratively to develop a standard definition and explanation of the contribution of previous experience and its place within a prior learning portfolio.

#3. In addition, colleges can work toward more flexible field placement policies, while at the same time ensuring that the field placement component remains an integral and well-supported component of education for day care workers. Debate and discussion with the day care community is needed about the goals/expectations of field placement for pre-service students compared to the needs of part time students who have experience in the field.

#4. Participants in this study identified lack of inter-institutional cooperation and course transferability as a barrier. This is certainly an area that requires attention by both public and private educational providers with the goal of better articulation.

Recommendations for Practitioners

#1. Day care workers need to increase their participation in the political sphere to help ensure that children and families have the quality day care programs they need. Quality programs pay their workers a decent wage to help ensure that children's needs and staff's needs are met. Day care workers are encouraged to help develop strong professional associations. An increased membership in associations provides a louder voice, increased leverage and a stronger political presence. Strong associations can lobby at all three levels of government to acquire the resources needed to fund quality programs for children and families

At the federal level, this means being involved with, and advocating for, initiatives like the National Children's Agenda. At the provincial level, this means

gaining a better understanding of the role of the provincial government in relation to day care services. Day care workers need a more accurate political awareness of the current government's ideology and the resultant policy that reinforces traditional families and forces day care into the market place. Colleges and professional associations can help educate day care workers to become more knowledgeable about their role in informing the development of public policy. All day care workers must work together to advocate for change.

#2. Day care workers are asking for public recognition of the valuable work they do. This means educating the public on the special nature of this field, the complexity of the role of day care worker, and their significant responsibilities to families and to society. An annual recognition week for day care workers, with accompanying information on the role and expertise that they hold, may help to raise public awareness. Some positive media releases that portray good news stories in day care would also help raise the reputation of the field. Associations should be encouraged to make use of existing recognizable events like National Child Day and National Family Week to highlight their contributions to society.

#3. Day care directors/owners/commercial operators have a role to play in lowering educational barriers as well. The survey indicated that only 34% of staff had financial help from their employer to cover the cost of the courses. Employers should be expected to share the responsibility for the cost of courses, as the classes will directly benefit their centre's operation. If this is not an option then other methods of support can be offered. Can the centre pay for texts that all staff may access for courses, or provide time to attend a course that is scheduled during the

day? At the minimum directors need to offer emotional support and model continuing professional development.

Policies at the centre level will also help support day care workers who want to attend classes. For example the flexibility to work an early shift on the day of an evening class would definitely show support for that person's continued effort to achieve Level 3 certification. Opportunities during the day to do homework or to study would also show support of the educational process. Allowing staff to carry out practical homework assignments during work hours or acting as a field placement site for students also supports the educational endeavors of staff. Can staff use the centre's computer to type homework assignments or to search the Internet for on-line resources related to course work?

#4. How can day care staff make things easier on themselves as they try to juggle work, home, and schooling? How can staff support each other? Are they willing to share brochures, calendars, and course scheduling information with others? Can they form a study/support group to support each other's learning and application of their new knowledge? Can they share child care while each other attend a night class? Can they carpool to the college for courses? Can they share texts and other required materials to lessen the costs?

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study and on the existing research on barriers to education, it is suggested that additional research is needed to further explore this area. Replication of this study as it was designed is not recommended due to the limitations noted earlier. To measure barriers on the provincial or national scene may

be less effective than looking at specific communities or at specific groups, so that stakeholders can be further involved in finding ways to lower barriers. Listed below are areas recommended for further study related to educational barriers for day care workers.

#1. Questions still exist about specific barriers for day care workers and how these barriers operate. We need a more comprehensive look at barriers at the different levels of certification and at different points in the educational process. Where are the stumbling blocks? Where do day care workers start to get bogged down in the educational/certification process? Can the process be sped up? Made less costly?

#2. Additional research is needed on those who have successfully completed the training/certification process. What contributed to their success? How did they overcome the barriers? Knowing the answer to these questions may help us in our ability to lower barriers for others.

#3. This research used a mixed method approach. The initial focus group provided a small "tip of the iceberg" glance at what day care workers are experiencing in trying to achieve their certification. The survey tool helped provide a bit of a broader view of the day care workers perceptions of barriers and was a good initial starting point to examine the phenomenon of barriers. Now, further indepth study of this population using interviews and other qualitative tools is needed to really get a more extensive picture of what life is like for those who choose to care for the children of our society. These women (and men) need a

voice and need to be recognized for the value they add to our society. Additional study would give their struggle for recognition meaning and context.

In addition, further indepth research on the roles and impacts of other stakeholder groups on ECD educational barriers is needed. It is relevant and essential to gather information from college personnel and administrators, from government/certification personnel, from day care owners and operators, from early childhood associations, and from families who use day care services. This kind of study may give us a more holistic understanding of the relationships in which barriers to education operate and are often reinforced.

Summary

Day care workers with postsecondary education in child development and early childhood education are more likely to be associated with higher quality programs and better child outcomes than those with no postsecondary education (Beach, 1998). Understanding the barriers to completing ECD training will in the long run benefit the children and citizens of Alberta. The aspects that most influence a day care program's ability to provide high quality services revolve around the number of staff, their characteristics, their qualifications, their ability and their stability (Willer, 1990). A link between training and stability was evident in research by LaGrange and Read in Alberta (1990). They report that day care workers with early childhood postsecondary qualifications were more likely to stay in the field for more than five years. So if ways can be found to overcome the obstacles to training we could produce a knowledgeable, stable population of day care workers who are better able to create and guide children through quality early childhood programs.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Invitation

Appendix A
Focus Group Invitation

February 3, 2000

Dear Day Care Worker,

Have you found it difficult to complete your ECD training or to gain Level 3 certification from Alberta Children's Services? If so you are invited to participate in a focus group discussion on the barriers to ECD training in Alberta.

The purpose of the focus group is to discuss the problems associated with accessing education towards Day Care Certification. The discussion will be used to create a questionnaire for day care workers. The questionnaire will then be distributed to day care centres in Alberta. Information collected from the questionnaires will be used to support my Graduate Degree Paper titled "Barriers to Education in Early Childhood Development".

As a participant, you can expect to have the opportunity to share your experience with post secondary education in early childhood development and achieving certification. If you or another of your colleagues is interested in attending, call me immediately at 497-5171. Your call does not commit you to participate.

If you are unable to attend the focus group and would like to have some input into this research, watch for the questionnaire to reach your day care centre in March 2000.

Focus Group Details

Date: February 24, 2000
Time: 7:00-9:00
Place: Glenora Child Care Society

Refreshments will be provided.

Thank you,

Patricia Lirette

Appendix B

Ethical Rights for Participants

Appendix B
Ethical Rights for Participants

Feb 3, 2000

Dear Day Care Worker,

Thank you for volunteering to participate in the focus group discussion for the research project " Barriers to Education in Early Childhood development". This letter will provide you with information about the your rights as a participant in a research project.

Ethical Guidelines and Your Rights as a Research Participant

The research that you are involved in follows the ethical guidelines for research involving human participants and has been approved by the Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta.

1. You have the right to understand the purpose and the nature of the research before you provide your input at the focus group session.

2. If at any time before or during the focus group you wish to opt out you may do so.

3. Any information you may provide during the focus group session will remain anonymous and confidential. Responses will not be identified specifically as originating from one person.

4. No threat or harm will occur as a result of your participation in the focus group session.

5. Following the focus group session, the researcher will be the only one with access to the data. Once the thesis report is accepted the raw information from the focus group will be destroyed.

The focus group will take place at:

Glenora Child Care Society
St. Vincent School, 10530- 138st.
Thursday February 24, 2000
7:00-9:00 p.m.
Refreshments will be provided.

I look forward to your active participation.

Thank you,
Patricia Lirette

Appendix C

Focus Group Agenda

February 24, 2000

Appendix C

Focus Group Agenda

"Barriers to Education in Early Childhood Development"

Date: February 24, 2000
Time: 7:00-9:00
Place: Glenora Child Care Society
St. Vincent School
10530-138 Street

Set up room, post research questions on flip chart paper, prepare refreshments, and ensure all recording material in place.

Greet participants as they enter, provide with a name card (first name only) and ask to sign Informed Consent Form and fill in the Background Information Form. Thank them individually for coming. Invite them to the refreshment table.

Introductory Steps (3-5 minutes)
Welcome and thank Glenora Child Care for the space

- Researcher greeting and self introduction

- Facilitator greeting and self introduction

- Role definitions: participant, researcher, and facilitator
  Facilitator- my role is to guide the discussion, to ask general questions to enhance the conversation. I will not participate fully in the discussion. If I see someone has not had the opportunity to speak I may ask for his or her comments. Feel free to pass or respond at will.
  Researcher- my role tonight is an observer and recorder. I will be jotting down comments to refer to after you have left so if you see me writing it means that your comments are important. You have agreed to audiotaping the focus group tonight, simply for the ease of capturing what was said. I will not be participating in the discussion itself. Some of you may know D. and myself from our roles at the college. We are not here as college representatives tonight and we hope that our affiliation with the college will not influence your discussion here tonight.
  Participants- Your role is to share your own experiences, it will be most helpful if you try to discuss only your own experiences, not those of your coworkers or friends unless we specifically ask you to generalize to others. Okay?

- Nature of focus group, participation guidelines

-to explore the barriers to obtaining the education necessary for Level 3 certification, may not solve the problems tonight. Tonight we are collecting information about what the barriers are for you and then we will create a questionnaire that will go to other day care workers to get a province wide picture of the issues.
-to get your perceptions. Perceptions of barriers may vary which is okay. Some of you may have faced similar barriers, but we do not need to all agree, in fact we may disagree. If you do disagree you are free to state that it was different for you.

- Questions?

I. Participant introductions (first names only, current level of certification and length of time working on achieving certification).

II. General opening question (30-40 mins)
Think back over the last year, what has affected your ability to attain the courses or level of certification that you wanted to get?
(Make sure that each person has the opportunity to respond to this question. The sub questions below may be used to explore the opening question in more depth if necessary).

Sub question #1 Situational barriers

Sometimes situations arise that make it difficult for day care workers to take courses/training even if they want to. Have you experienced any situations like this in the last year?

Responses may include:
-family/domestic commitments and situations
-economic circumstances/cost
no reimbursement or financial assistance for costs associated with education
high cost of courses
-time constraints
-lack of support systems
-child care problems
-transportation

Sub Question #2 Dispositional barriers

Some day care workers worry that can't complete the course requirements (keep up with readings, do assignments etc). How do you feel about your own ability to succeed in courses?

Responses may include:
-perception of self as learner

-patterns of participation
-influence of gender and lack of voice
-lack of confidence

Sub question #3 Institutional barriers

What are your experiences in the last year with the staff certification process from Alberta Children's Services?
What are your experiences in the last year with the institutions that offer ECD training programs?

Responses may include process and policy barriers like:
-scheduling
-location/transportation
-courses not interesting or relevant
-procedural/process problems
-time requirements
-lack of information about programs and procedures
-lack of knowledge about post secondary system

Sub question #4 Sociopolitical context

Do you believe that the larger views of society about day care have acted as a barrier to you achieving your Level 3 certification?

Responses may include:
-public perception of contribution made by caregivers
-societal undervaluing of children
-government emphasis on business and technical skills related to training and funding opportunities
-pressure to achieve level three from provincial licensing
-lack of support of provincial government
-caring nature of the work not recognized by western society
-labour market conditions and occupational structures
-public perception that the cost of child care is considered the parent's responsibility (not an essential public service like health and education)

III. **If you were designing this survey what kinds of things would you be asking other day care workers about barriers?** (how could we collect info about and measure the barriers)(8:10-8:20)

IV. **What is your number one barrier to you attaining Level 3 certification?** (Make sure each person has the opportunity to say which is his or her own main barrier).
(8:20-8:30)

V. **What are your suggestions on how to address the barriers or help make it easier for you at achieve Level Three certification?** (8:30-8:50)

VI. Conclusion of session (8:50- 9:00)

- Summarize (2-3 min). Ask if this is an adequate summary. Did I correctly capture what was said? Did we miss any thing that relates to the barriers you may have experienced? (D.)
- Volunteers to participate in pilot study of questionnaire (sign up sheet) (Tricia)
- Remind the participants to watch the mail for the questionnaire in March (Tricia)
- Thank you to participants/ honorariums (Tricia)

Appendix D

Background Information Form

Appendix D

Background Information Form

Background Information Form for Focus Group Participants

1. Your first name _____

2. Age
   ( ) 20's
   ( ) 30's
   ( ) 40's
   ( ) 50's
   ( ) 60's or older

3. Gender
   ( ) Male
   ( ) Female

4. What is your current Level of Certification?
   ( ) Level I
   ( ) Level II Exception
   ( ) Level II
   ( ) Level III Exemption
   ( ) Level III
   ( ) Other _____

5. Are you currently registered in a course that will apply towards Level III Certification?
   ( ) Yes
   ( ) No

6. Which of the following describes you? (Check all that apply)
   ( ) Day care worker
   ( ) Day care owner/operator
   ( ) Day care director/assistant director
   ( ) Other _____

7. Which of the following describes you?
   ( ) Employed by a public or non profit agency or organization
   ( ) Employed by a private agency or organization
   ( ) Presently not employed
   ( ) Other _____

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix E

Statement of Informed Consent

Appendix E

Statement of Informed Consent

I, _____, agree to participate in the research project "Barriers to Education in Early Childhood Development" being conducted by Patricia Lirette from the University of Alberta.

I understand the purpose of the study is to hold a group interview to find out about the barriers to education as perceived by day care workers. We will discuss our general ideas and experiences in trying to achieve Level 3 certification. The information discussed here will be used to help generate a questionnaire that will be used to survey other Alberta day care workers.

I understand that the information discussed in the group interview will be audiotaped.

I understand that my participation in the research project is voluntary and if I wish to withdraw from the study or to leave the focus group I may do so at any time, without giving a reason or explanation. Withdrawing from the study will have no impact on my relationship with the researcher, the University of Alberta or any other agency or organization.

The researcher will make every attempt to guarantee the privacy of the participants. The researcher will be the only one with access to the data. To assist in this matter, I agree not to disclose any information discussed by myself or other participants in the focus group.

I understand that all information that I give will be kept confidential. The names of all the people in the study will be kept confidential. Comments made in the focus group may be included in the written research report but will not be identified as originating from a specific person.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher regarding the study.

I have read and understand this information and I agree to take part in the study.

Date_____ Signature_____

Appendix F

Sample Questionnaire

"Barriers to Education and Level 3 Certification"

Section I

Check the answer that applies to you.

1. What is your level of certification?
   - __ Level 3 Thank you. Please do not complete the survey.
   - __ Level 3 Exemption
   - __ Level 2
   - __ Level 2 Exemption
   - __ Level 1
   - __ Other_____

2. Are you currently registered in an Early Childhood (EC) course leading to Level 3 Certification?
   - __ Yes
   - __ No

   If no, why not? _____

3. At which institution(s) have you taken EC courses towards Level 3 Certification? (Check all that apply).
   - __ AVC -Lac La Biche
   - __ Mount Royal
   - __ Keyano College
   - __ Lakeland College
   - __ Medicine Hat College
   - __ Red Deer College
   - __ Bow Valley
   - __ Lethbridge Community College
   - __ Grant MacEwan College
   - __ Career College
   - __ Grande Prairie Regional College
   - __ Other

   (specify)_____

4. Which of the following describes your current role? (Check all that apply).
   - __ Day care worker
   - __ Day care owner/operator
   - __ Day care director/assistant director
   - __ Other (specify)_____

5. What is your current employment?
   - __ I am employed by a non profit day care agency.
   - __ I am employed by a private day care agency.
   - __ I am presently not employed.
   - __ Other

   (specify)_____

6. I currently work in a:
   - __ Urban setting
   - __ Rural setting

7. Which statement best describes your interest in attaining Level 3 Certification?
   - __ I am not interested (and will not take any steps to achieve Level 3 Certification). **Skip to Q. 9**
   - __ I am partially interested (and may or may not take steps to achieve Level 3 Certification).
   - __ I am very interested (and am determined to take the steps needed to achieve Level 3 Certification).

8. Which statement(s) describes why you want to obtain Level 3 Certification? (Check all that apply).
   - __ To increase my earnings/salary.
   - __ To advance my career.
   - __ For personal/professional development reasons.
   - __ To meet day care licensing requirements.
   - __ To meet employer expectations.
   - __ To meet job expectations.
   - __ To obtain a diploma.
   - __ Other (specify)_____

9. I have children who require child care while I attend EC courses.
   - __ Yes
   - __ No

Section II

1. Some day care workers have difficulty completing Level 3 Certification. For each statement, check the response that best describes your feelings about participating in EC courses.

Statement	Yes	Sometimes	No
1. I have confidence in my ability to succeed.			
2. I feel prepared for postsecondary education.			
3. I have time for all the homework.			
4. I have the energy needed to take courses.			
5. I have health issues that prevent me from taking courses.			
6. I have enjoyed past educational experiences.			

Section III

1. Even if they want to take EC courses some day care workers encounter situations that interfere with their ability to participate. For each statement below, check the answer that applies to you.

Statement	Yes	Sometimes	No
1. I have time to participate in courses.			
2. I have the emotional support of my family to take courses.			
3. My employer encourages me to take courses.			
4. I have transportation to and from the courses.			
5. I have child care available so that I can attend a course.			
6. I have money to pay for courses.			
7. My level of written/spoken English allows me to succeed in courses.			
8. My family, community, and social commitments allow me to participate in courses.			
9. Besides tuition, I have money to pay for costs like texts, child care, parking, and transportation.			

2. The cost of courses is often mentioned as a barrier. What strategies do you use to help finance the cost of EC courses? (Check all that apply).

__ I work two jobs to help pay for courses.
__ I receive financial support from my employer to cover the cost of courses.
__ I apply for student bursaries and awards from the colleges.
__ My family helps to cover the cost of the courses.
__ I have a student loan to cover the cost of courses.
__ I pay for the courses myself.
__ Other (specify)_____

Section IV

Reflect on your experience with your local college. For each statement below, check the response that applies to you.

Statement	Yes	Sometimes	No
1. Courses are scheduled at times that are convenient to my schedule.			
2. Courses are scheduled in locations that are accessible to me.			
3. The content of most courses is relevant to my job.			
4. College instructors treat me with respect.			
5. My local college supports me as I try to reach Level 3 certification.			
6. College field placement policies allow flexibility.			
7. I know how to get information about course offerings at my local college.			
8. Information about courses is clear.			
9. It is easy to obtain information about courses.			
10. Courses that I have registered in have been cancelled due to low enrollment.			

2. Consider your experience with Day Care Staff Qualifications. Check the response that applies to you for each statement below.

Statement	Yes	Somewhat	No
1. I understand the certification process for day care workers in Alberta.			
2. I know where to obtain information on the certification process.			
3. I feel supported by the policies and procedures of Day Care Staff Qualifications in obtaining Level 3 Certification.			
4. My experience and previous qualifications were recognized by Day Care Staff Qualifications and were applied towards my Level 3 Certification.			

Section V

1. To what extent have each of the following affected your decision to achieve Level 3 Certification? Check the answer that applies to you.

Statement	No effect	Some effect	Great effect
1. Day care is not viewed as a necessary part of the whole education system.			
2. As a whole our society does not value children.			
3. The public sees your job as just babysitting.			
4. The Alberta government provides too little funding to day care centres.			

Section VI

1. In the space provided describe your **number one** barrier to achieving Level 3 Certification.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Are there any other barriers that you have experienced related to achieving Level 3 Certification? Please explain briefly.

_____
_____
_____

3. Briefly share your feelings about achieving Level 3 certification.

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Have you any suggestions to remove the barriers that day care workers face in reaching Level 3 Certification?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Age (please check)
   - __ under 20
   - __ 20s
   - __ 30s
   - __ 40s
   - __ 50s
   - __ 60s or older

6. Gender
   - __ Female
   - __ Male

Thank you for participating in this survey. Please fax your survey (no cover sheet is necessary) back to Patricia Lirette at (780) 497-5848, or mail back your response in the stamped reply envelope by March 31, 2000.

Appendix G

Questionnaire Covering Letter

Appendix G

Questionnaire Covering Letter

March 10, 2000

Dear Day Care Staff,

- Are you or anyone on site working towards Level 3 Certification?
- Have you or your staff members experienced delays or frustrations obtaining the education you need to attain certification?
- Have barriers impacted your ability to participate in early childhood courses?

If so, you are invited to fill out the attached survey.

I am a Masters Degree student currently engaged in a research project. The purpose of my research is to identify the barriers experienced by day care workers in attaining early childhood development training. This survey has gone to all the day care centres in Alberta. It is important that day care workers are heard and that barriers be clearly identified. **Your answers may help increase access to educational opportunities for day care workers by informing the colleges and the Alberta Government about the issues you face.**

Your responses will be anonymous and confidential. Please do not place your name on the survey. Participation in this research is strictly voluntary. You are under no obligation to take part, however I urge you to consider sharing your experiences. Please take a few moments now to complete the four-page survey. Return it to me by mail in the stamped reply envelope or fax it back to me at (780) 497-5848 by March 31, 2000.

Thank you for your time.

Patricia Lirette

Note: The survey is for day care staff who have <u>not</u> yet achieved Level 3 Certification from Day Care Staff Qualifications. If you require more than one copy of the survey please photocopy it or contact me at (780) 497-5171 for additional copies.

Appendix H

Barriers Described in the Focus Group

Appendix H

Barriers Described in the Focus Group

Dispositional Barriers

-not willing to give up as much time as it takes
-Career College classes smaller, less threatening
-not willing to give up family time
-personality conflict with the instructor
-not possessing the necessary written and spoken English skills means additional time and money for upgrading courses.

Situational Barriers

-time
-cost/finances
-cost/lack of income
-cost/loss of income on placement
-family commitments
-work all day, tired at night
-no financial incentive to continue

Institutional Barriers

-Children's services not taking our situation seriously
-having to commute in to City for classes
-limited assistance from student financing
-mature students not treated as adults
-qualifications from other countries not recognized
-difficult to do assignments if not working in the field (are not working in the field because then they can't afford the courses)
-Scheduling of classes (hours, days, shifts at work)
    -Saturday classes interfere with part time work
-courses not offered on the campus nearest to you
-instructors not practicing what they preach, not empathizing with students, judging them

Career College (CC)

-non transferability of courses to GMC or elsewhere
-no recognition of CC outside of Alberta
-forced to settle for a lesser quality education
-class time spent supporting students with poor English language skills
-increase difficulty of courses as you progress in the program

Grant MacEwan College (GMC)

-day program class environment not conducive to learning, established group to break in to, younger students
-cancellation of courses for low enrollment
-participation/attendance expectation at GMC
-group assignments
-field placement length
-field placement not in own place of work
-the cost and loss of income during field placement
-lack of testing, evaluation
-not enough 2nd year courses being offered concurrently
-info on course offerings not accessible or clear
-length of time it takes to complete with no means to shorten
-length of time in program with no end in sight

Sociopolitical Barriers

-government choosing to spend in other areas
-low wages reflect low societal value
-not all centres are at the same level of quality and services
-play not valued as education
-lack of informed/educated public